

Lessons Learned from
The Book of Ephesians

**Four Principles of the
Christian Way of Life**

Book 2



**Putting the Pieces Together
so the Life of Christ is Manifest among the
People of God!**

Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Foreword

*This is the second in a two-book series based upon
Pastor Kevin's series of sermons on Ephesians.*

The fellowship of Vistoso Community Church is an unusual collection of people. They have varied backgrounds, come from many parts of the country, and are a mix of those living here full-time as well as winter visitors. These, however, are not the factors that make them unique. This congregation is special because they gather, week in and week out, to hear the Word taught, and, when they are convinced they are hearing the truth, they respond to it.



There is no greater encouragement, for one who proclaims the Word, than an audience who will listen to it. For that, I am deeply grateful to you and the Lord for blessing me in such a way.

In His grace,

Kevin Redig

*All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the
NKJV (1992 edition) or the NIV (1984 edition).*

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Principle #3

What To Do With This New Life?

I hope you can see the practicality of first making sure we understand what not to do with the new life, before turning to what to do with the marvelous gift of the very life of Christ within. I trust that we have a shared understanding of the truth:

...by grace we have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

God, in grace, has done all of the work of salvation! Ours is to simply receive His gift of salvation through faith. That means that nothing we do—not our works, sincerity, or promises to God—plays any part in our being transferred:

...from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son He loves. Colossians 1:13

There are two reasons for this. First, a spiritually dead person—that is what we all were right up to the moment we placed our faith in Christ—can do absolutely nothing to earn salvation. Consider this passage from the eighth chapter of Romans:

So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:8

No matter how well intentioned a lost people might be as they become aware of their need before a holy God, the only source from which they can operate is the flesh. Any promise, any commitment can only be from the flesh, and this verse make it clear that efforts from the flesh will not please God. Perhaps you are thinking, “What about the faith of the lost, would that not be from the flesh as well?” Certainly, in the sense that it is the response of a lost,

unregenerate person. But here are the differences:

- Our faith is a response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8), which is the intent of His ministry.
- Faith is seen as antithetical to works (Romans 9:30-32). By this I simply mean that faith and works are complete polar opposites.
- The merit is not in the lost's exercise of faith, but in the object of that faith. In the case of our salvation, the object is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the epitome of pleasing God. When we trust in Him as the one who *works out our salvation*, He, as the object, receives all the glory and we have no claim (boast).

I want to be quick to remind you, that to speak out against a thing improperly applied is not to be against it in its proper place, nor is it to underestimate its value. By this I mean that works most certainly have their place in the Christian Life. So, too, does commitment, sincerity (purity) of heart, and so on. However, to state this in the simplest way possible, these are all the intended results of our becoming a child of God. They are not intended to be the means by which we are saved and become the children of God! If they are the intended result, then they are subsequent to our salvation and not a condition necessary to receive it.



Even after coming to an understanding of the above, we are going to have to deal with the same basic struggle all over again when it comes to the Christian Life. And by that I mean: what is the *division of labor* associated with the Christian Life—what is God’s responsibility and what is our responsibility? Let me remind you that when I refer to the Christian Life, I am talking about the number of days that God gives us on this earth from the day we place our faith in Christ, until the day He calls us to stand face-to-face before Him. These are the days we are called to *redeem*, to make the most of them by avoiding carnality and producing fruit.

Two Competing Views

To help you understand the nature of the theological struggle regarding the Christian Life, let me give you two competing views as to how we are to live that life. Decide with me which approach is more Biblical.

View #1: *Jesus died for us, He did the most for us by saving us. Now the Christian Life is up to us. Our standing as a Christian is determined by how well we follow up on what Christ did for us!*

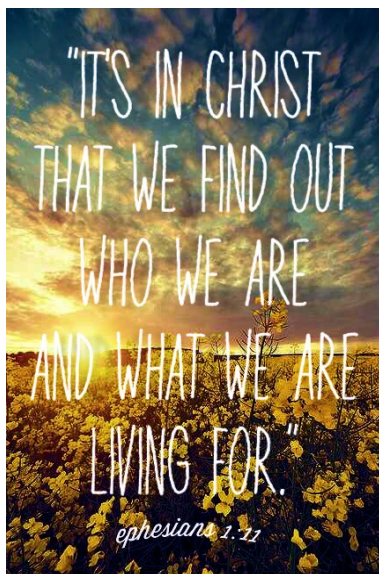
The means of living this view of the Christian Life is typically gratitude for what Christ has done for us or love for Him. The outworking of this view tends to have certain guidelines to which every *good* Christian needs to adhere. This view is taught under a variety of different titles with some of the more common being:

- *The Division of Labor:* God did the most for you by dying for you on the cross, now the least you can do is to live a good life.
- *The Gut-it-Out Approach:* The Christian Life is going to be hard, and so you just need to bear down and gut it out in order to get your reward.

- *The Halftime Approach:* The Christian Life is like a locker-room half-time pep talk where Christians are repeatedly admonished to persevere, endure, and do it all for Jesus!
- *The Love Motive Approach:* Jesus died for us, it is up to us to show our love for Him by living the Christian Life to the best of our abilities.

Now I am not denying there are some elements of truth in the above. Nevertheless, here is what I am asking, “Are these God’s ways as decreed in His Word?” There are two big problems with these approaches from the start:

1. There is no power in any of these paradigms outside of the individual’s will power and personality. That means these approaches to the Christian Life are based upon the flesh. How could that possibly be what God has prescribed?
2. The view that we can live the Christian life by human effort is disconnected from the truth that every born-again child of God is “in Christ!” They have been made alive in Him, raised up with Him, and are seated with Him in the heavenly realms. Where is this relationship in the view that the Christian life is up to us? Instead, this view sees Christ as a really good coach, or a business partner, or our co-pilot. Is that the Biblical view of the Christian Life?



I suggest that there is an unbiblical emphasis in View #1. This unbiblical view will either lead to a personality-driven Christian Life or one of great inner turmoil. The turmoil comes because this view forces one to try and suppress the reality of the contrast between what is happening on the inside to what is proclaimed on the outside. This should give us serious pause before approaching the Christian Life from the standpoint of View #1. Furthermore, Biblically, I can show you the absolutely complete and abject failure of this approach. Consider with me the following extract from Romans 7:15-25:

*For what I am doing, I do not understand.
For what I will to do, that I do not practice;
but what I hate, that I do. . .but now, it is no longer I
who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in
me (that is in my flesh) nothing good dwells;
for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is
good I do not find. . .the evil I will not to do,
that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do,
it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. . .
I see another law in my members, warring against the
law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the
law of sin which is in my members.
O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me
from this body of death?*

Wretched man indeed! For that is the heart cry of the Christian who is trying to live the Christian Life by any of the means that we have described above. As we struggle to do what we know will please the Lord, we will find the flesh resists us at every step. As soon as we reduce the Christian Life to something that depends upon us and our efforts, we are doomed to soon be confessing:

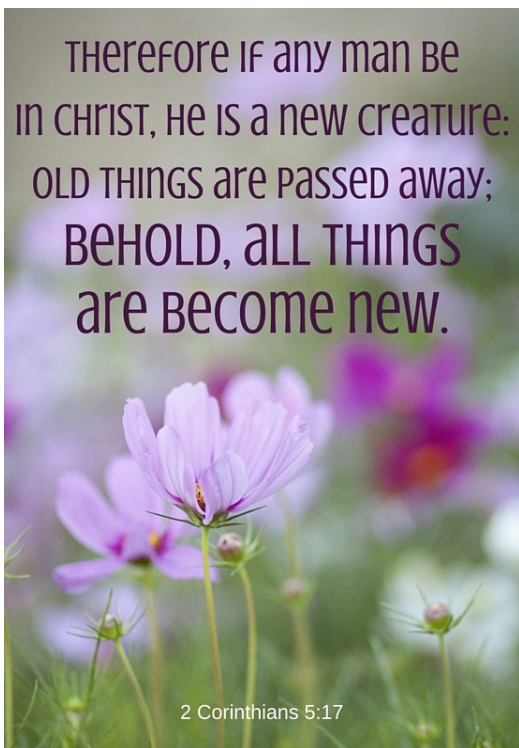
"O wretched man the I am!" Romans 24:7a

There must be another basis upon which to live the Christian Life. There is! Let me finish the above passage from Romans 7:

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:24

Do you see it? The answer to the failings of self is not to bear down and try harder. Deliverance will never be found in self-effort. Rather, thank God for what He has provided *through Jesus Christ our Lord!* We need to come to Him and His provision, not through our own efforts, well-intentioned though they may be.

View #2: I believe View #2 to be a more Biblical approach. It sees the Christian Life in light of the Christian's union with Christ. It starts from an understanding that we have new life in Him, have been raised up with Him, and are positionally seated with Him in the heavenly realms. It causes us to immediately see ourselves as new creations in Him (II Corinthians 5:17) and complete in Him (Colossians 2:10).



Perhaps most importantly for our subject, View #2 sees

Ponder the following Scriptures, and let them begin to prompt your faith. Allow them to convince you that God is not our copilot, giving us occasional directions, nor is it up to us to constantly get psyched up to try harder. Rather:

For to me, to live is Christ. . . Philippians 1:21

*I have been crucified with Christ;
it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;
and the life which I now live by faith. . .*

Galatians 2:20-21

Reflect upon these Scriptures. See that the Christian Life consists of the very life of Christ being manifested through us. Do you see the problem with View #1 of the Christian Life? It is trying to rehabilitate the old life, or at least trying to force it to *behave*! The Bible, on the other hand, teaches the Christian to crucify the Old Man! No wonder View #1 leads to the despair of Romans Chapter 7, it is not remotely in tune with God's plan for the Christian Life.

Scriptural Support for View #2

Let me lay out View #2 for you scripturally:

- Jesus died for us and saved us. If He did that, He will certainly not leave us to work out the Christian Life on our own!

*He who did not spare His own Son,
but delivered Him up for us all,
how shall He not with Him also freely
give us all things? Romans 8:32*

In the same way that we were completely incapable of saving ourselves, we are just as incapable of living the Christian Life from a source within ourselves—from our own strength, resolve, or sincerity! Rather, we are to live the Christian Life from the source of the new life that is within, as it is enabled by the Holy Spirit and guided by the Word of God.

- The Christian Life is meant to be lived on the basis that Christ Himself is the source of our new life.

God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life. . . 1 John 5:11-12

. . . nevertheless, Christ lives in me. . . Galatians 2:20

The Christian Life cannot be lived through vain efforts to rehabilitate who and what we were in Adam. It is a spiritual life and requires a spiritual work within. Christian teacher Watchman Nee says it this way:

[The] new birth is the reception of a life which I did not possess before. It is not that my natural life has been changed. . . it is that another life, a life altogether new, altogether divine has become my life.

- Having Christ as the inspiration and source of our Christian Life has tremendous ramifications that are based upon our union with Christ!

When Christ, who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Colossians 3:4

I believe this passage is a reference to the return of Christ. In a very real sense we are so intimately related to Christ that whatever He is doing, we will be with Him. That is a part of sharing in His life!

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. . . Romans 8:29

All Christians are meant to be in the process of transformation. This transformation is meant to result in them being conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ. It is difficult to explain how this could ever actually occur until you realize that this would have to be the case if we really did have the life of Christ within. This is exactly what the Bible says is true of every child of God.

- The choice between these two views of the Christian Life is the difference between wearisome striving and confident appropriation.

Jesus said:

*"Come unto Me.,"
[Why would we do that?
Because He is our life]
all you who labor
and are heavy laden,
and I will give
you rest."
Matthew 11:28*

Perhaps labor refers to our efforts to try and control self, to try and control the sin nature.

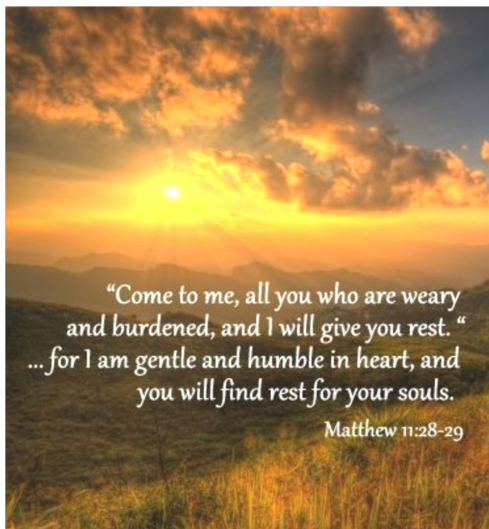
Could a life of trying

to make ourselves do the things we know we should do be a burden far too great for any of us to carry?

*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me,
for I am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.
Matthew 11:29-30*

Could this be a reference to God's way of the Spirit-enabled life in contrast to self-effort? Do you think the new life within is naturally drawn to conformity to the likeness of Christ? Of course, that's why:

*...being confident of this very thing,
that He who has begun a good work in you
will complete it until the day
of Christ Jesus.
Philippians 1:6*



- With these assurances from the Bible, why is this not the experience of all Christians? Although our hearts may be longingly drawn to the Scriptural truth of what I am showing you, for most it has not been our experience. Why not? Could it be that a combination of our natural tendencies, and some misleading teaching, has caused us to spend all of our energies on trying to live the Christian Life by our own strength.

God's ways really are higher than man's ways. Until we are ready to turn to Him and do things His way, we are going to waste time and energy spinning our wheels. Could this spinning of wheels be the reason so many give up on the Christian Life altogether out of frustration?



*The Christian Life is simple but deep,
it is understandable and compelling,
but also comprehensive. It is solid food
for those who are engaged in maturing.*

- Uninformed pressure to live a certain kind of Christian Life is wrong on two counts:

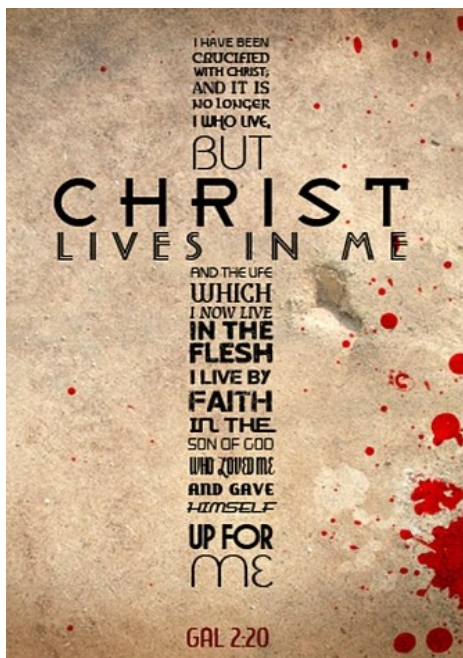
As regards the lost. It is not something a dead person can do. When we place the quality of life that God expects from a mature believer in front of an unbeliever, and tell them they have to live this kind of transformed life, we are putting an obstacle in front of them that they will see as impossible. This is a task that they are not ready to perform. That is not the Gospel!

As regards the saved. It is also not something a Christian can do from the source of the Old Man!

As Biblical teacher Miles Stanford put it:

It is time for us to see the necessity of going beyond the love motive to the life motive—“for to me to live is Christ.” Our consecration, surrender or commitment will never hold up if it is responding to Him from any source other than His life in us. Yielding to Him on any different basis will simply amount to our trying to live for Him from the source of self.

We already know that no good thing lives within us, that is within our sinful nature. In fact, the Biblical solution to self is to reckon it crucified:



/ [the Old Man]
*have been crucified
with Christ,
and I
[who I was in Adam]
no longer live. . . .*
Galatians 2:20

Presenting Ourselves to God

To reinforce what I have been trying to show you, let's talk about the idea of *presenting ourselves to God*. The first question is, what is it that we are to present? By now you won't be the least bit surprised at the an-

swer. We are to present the new life we have in Christ and never the old!

Look at how clear the Scriptures are on this matter:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin....

Romans 6:12-13a

The word translated "*present*" means to yield, to come alongside, and to give what is due. If we are not to *present ourselves to unrighteousness*, which would include allowing ourselves to get tangled up in the pattern of this world, then to whom are we to present ourselves?

...but present yourselves to God, as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Romans 6:13b

The Answer to the Question

We now have the answer to the question that began our investigation

some pages ago.

What are we to do

with the new life

that is ours in

Christ? We are to

present it to God

for His use and

His purposes!

How are we to

know that it is just

the new life and

not anything else?

The text defines

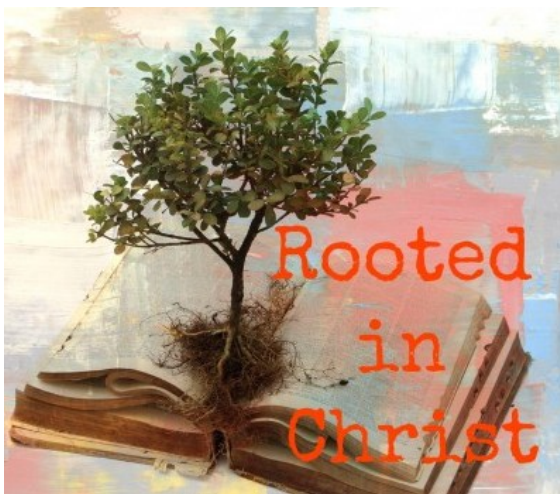
exactly what is to be *presented* to God. It is who we are in

Christ, *as being alive from the dead*! This new life we

have in Christ is to be yielded to Him, presented to Him,

and put under His control.

This is what we are to do with the new life!



As one area of application, I challenge you to think about what you see going on in the church in America: bigger buildings and campuses, slicker presentations, entertainment, coffee bars, and praise bands. Doesn't it all seem so worldly. God is going to have nothing to do with all these fleshly things. For we are told to crucify the flesh, and then present the new, and only the new, to Him for His purposes.

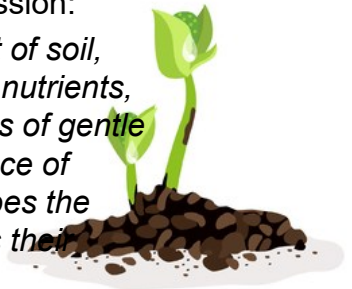
Which view of the Christian Life do you think is the most closely aligned with the ways of God as laid out in His Word? Did Jesus save us so we could make our absolutely best effort as a way of paying Him for what He did for us? Or, are we to look to Him and His grace for the means to live the kind of life to which He has called us—a supernaturally high calling? Certainly, we are to learn to look to him for the ability to lead the Christian Life in exactly the same way we had to look to Him to save us. I know God has work for me to do, but I also know I have no hope of accomplishing that work unless:

...it is God who works in me to will and to act according to His good purpose.

Philippians 2:12-13

I greatly appreciate these words that I read once on which I have expanded to illustrate our discussion:

*No seedling planted in the finest of soil,
fertilized with just the right blend of nutrients,
gently watered daily, with long days of gentle
sunshine. . . has any better chance of
growing and producing fruit than does the
least child of God who understands the
union with Christ, walks in the
light of God's Word and by His Spirit,
and presents his or her new life in Christ to God
for His purposes and His glory!
And all God's people said, "Amen!"*



Isaiah 48:17

This is what the Lord says—
your Redeemer, the Holy One of
Israel:

“I am the
Lord your
God,

who teaches
you what is
good for you
and leads
you along the
paths you
should follow.

Principle #4:

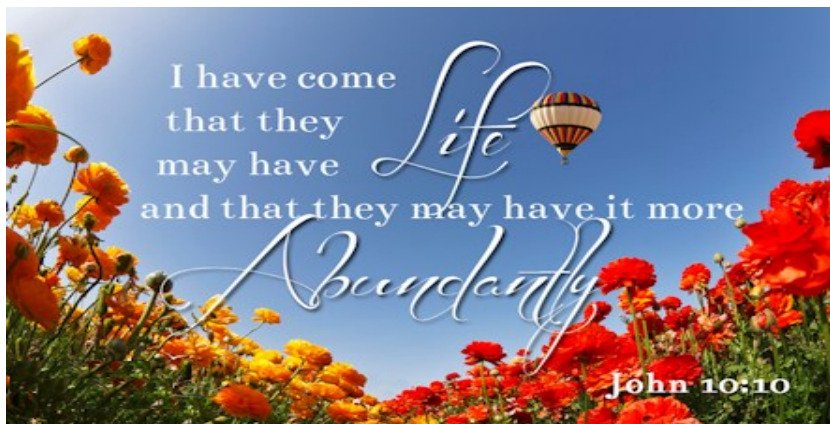
How To Do It?

By asking the question, “How to Do It,” I mean how do we consistently present the new life, that is ours in Christ, to God and for His purposes? We saw clearly in our previous study that we are to “*present ourselves to Him, as those alive from the dead.*” The challenge to do this consistently is especially great in the face of the external pull of the world around us and the internal desires of the flesh. As you can see, how to do it is the most practical of issues to address!

Think through the following with me. The first three chapters of the book of Ephesians teach us about the new life that is ours in Christ. This new life is coupled to an identity and position in Christ that is a spiritual blessing beyond compare. The second half of the book quite reasonably tells us to live a life that is of an “*equivalent weight*” to our identity in Christ (Ephesians 4:1) and to make sure we never follow the pattern of the lost of this world.

Now just how comfortable are you saying, “Yup—that pretty much describes my life—day in and day out?” Or would you perhaps have to say, “Well, maybe! Some of the time! On a good day!” The truth is, we all too often find ourselves living a watered down version of the kind of life the Bible describes for Christians. Our is too often more of a marginal Christian Life than the abundant Christian Life. Do you believe that the God, who did everything necessary to save us for all eternity, somehow only provided for a so-so Christian Life? Did God provide life on a level just slightly higher than the world around us? Are we to conclude that the high calling of Scripture is just not realistic! **Of course not!**

How do we approach this discrepancy between the life we feel called to live and the life we so often find ourselves living? We are going to appeal to the grace of God. If God's grace really is His abundant answer to our ever-changing need, then He will enable us to live the kind of life to which He has called us. We live the life we are called to live by turning to Him, trusting in the sufficiency of His provision, and resting in His faithfulness to His own.



We should expect to see His provision clearly delineated in the Scriptures. This will be our subject of study as we search for the grace provision of God in order to answer this question that we have raised:

How do we consistently present the new life we have in Christ to God, and for His purposes?

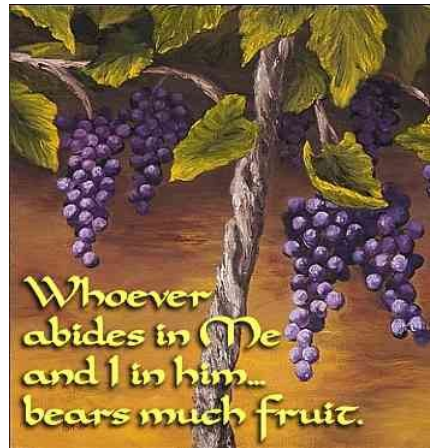
God's Answer

God's answer begins in Ephesians 4:20. It flows right out of a text we have recently studied—Ephesians 4:17. We are no longer to walk according to the pattern of this world:

... in the futility of their mind.... Ephesians 4:17

But you have not so learned Christ. . . Ephesians 4:20

Christians are to have gained understanding, they are to have been informed, of a new kind of life that is centered in none other than Jesus Christ. Think of the powerful call in John Chapter 15 to abide in the true vine that is Jesus Christ. Our lives are to be caught up in His.



It is entirely possible for Christians to mimic the thinking and behavior of the lost. But we learn that is not part of ongoing fellowship with Christ. When a fellowship of believers becomes worldly in its thinking and actions, then it has simply forsaken its first Love (Revelation 2:4) and is no longer abiding in the Vine! To follow the pattern of this world is not something you will learn from Christ!

Let's look at these important verses in Ephesians 4:21-24.

Verse 21 continues with a statement of something that was true of the believers in Ephesus, and should be true of us. They had:

*... heard Him and have been taught by Him,
as the truth is in Jesus ...*

Like all those who believe, it began with hearing the Gospel, and is meant to be followed up with regular teaching based upon the Word of God. For we are to let the:

Word of Christ dwell in [us] richly ... Colossians 3:16

One thing we can know for sure, no one grows into a functional, mature Christian apart from the regular intake of the Word of God.

Verses 22-24 are going to be the focal point of this section. You will find it helpful to read these three verses carefully, and underline the three verbs which are *put off*, *be renewed*, and *put on*.

- Verse 22:

That you put off the Old Man ...
corrupt according to deceitful lusts ...

When it comes to the Christian Life, this is what we are to avoid. Do you see the connection to Verse 17? No longer are we to walk according to the thinking of the world and the desires of the Old Man—the flesh! We are to *put it off*!

- Verse 23: Instead, we are to:

... be renewed in the spirit of our minds.

The idea of being renewed is to take on a *new* mind. We do this as we take in the Word of God and are taught by the Holy Spirit. It is the Word of God that provides spiritual sustenance for the Christian Life. First it illumines the soul:



The unfolding of Your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple.
Psalm 119:130

It provides that which can transform the life from what we were in Adam to what we are to be in Christ.

*And do not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewing
of your mind, that you may prove
what is the good and acceptable
and perfect will of God.*

Romans 12:2

- Verse 24: The instruction is to “*Put on the new man.*” But what is this new man like?

*... created according to God in true
righteousness and holiness.*

Who is this new man? It is the new life that we have in Christ. It is that born-again nature that is meant to be alive unto God and presented to Him.

These three verses are a concise statement of exactly what we have been working towards? The Christian Life has a very definite calling and look to it. If it doesn't look this way, it is not the Christian Life. It is to *take off* all that which is found in the Old Man—the fleshly Adamic nature. It is to be guided by the Word of God in the formation of a new man. This new man is to be according to the pattern of Jesus Christ in true righteousness and holiness.

A Marvelous Figure of Speech

This entire picture is presented to us in a marvelous figure of speech using the idea of clothing. In the same way you take off a soiled garment, we are to take off the flesh, all that we were in Adam. And then we are to put on the new, which is only understood as the mind is renewed in the light of God's Word.

This is a wonderfully condensed version of the truth. It is one that you are going to be able to recall to mind in an instant. It will be one that you will come back to hundreds of times during the remainder of your life. Nonetheless, I want to set it aside for a minute because we need to get the detail behind this figure of speech.

Nearly every epistle of Paul carries a reference to taking off the old and putting on the new, but the doctrinal truth that provides the foundation for all of these references can be found in the sixth chapter of Romans. In order to make sure our foundation in this matter is as firm as possible, I think it prudent to investigate what it has to say.

You may find it helpful to read carefully Romans 6:1-14.

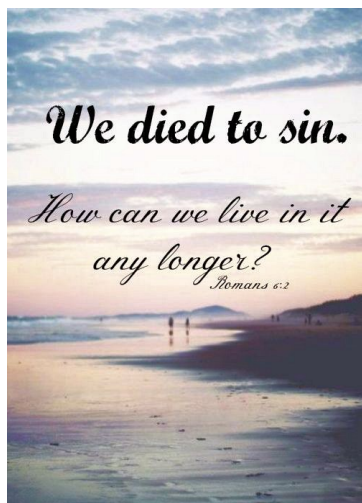
- **Verse 1:**

*What then shall we say?
Shall we continue in sin. ...*

Living like the lost of this world and then simply explaining it away by appealing to grace? Absolutely not!

- **Verses 2-4:** Absolutely not!

Why? When Christ died, we were identified with that death. The whole point of this identification was to break the hold of the flesh upon our lives. We were also identified with His resurrection. The whole point was that we might walk in newness of life—a resurrected life in which Christ lives in us. This is exactly what we have been talking about within the book of Ephesians? As new creatures in Christ, made alive and identified with Him, it would be out of the question for us to live a life patterned after the thinking of this



world or the desires of the flesh. Rather, we are to live a life that is best described as a resurrected life—that which would be understood to be in *true righteousness and holiness*.

The beginning of the life of holiness is a faith in the crucified Savior which sees more than His substitutionary work. It is a faith which sees myself identified with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Watchman Nee

For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

(Romans 6:4)



- **Verse 6:** Perhaps the idea of being identified with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is new to you. It is clearly explained in Verses 2-5. Beginning in Verse 6, Paul begins to tell us the reason why:

*... our Old Man was crucified with Him,
that the body of sin might be done away with ...*

Because we were identified with the death of Christ, the power of the Old Man was broken! Not eradicated, as the words *done away with* might lead you to believe. For those words are much better translated *inactive, inoperative*, or even to *render idle*. The idea is to cause a person or thing, in this case the old sin nature, to have no further efficacy because it has been deprived of its power or influence. The cross is God's means to *neutralize* the corrosive power of the sin nature in the life of every Christian!

- **Verses 7-9:**

For He who has died has been freed from sin."

Christians who have been identified with the death of Christ have had the power of sin in their lives broken. If we have died, and every Christian has, then we have been delivered. And we need to extend this one step further:

... if we died ... we shall also live with Him

This resurrection life is exactly the same as the new life we have been studying in Ephesians. It is part of the work God does in every human being following their faith in the person and work of Christ. The question for every believer is this, "Are you aware of what God has done for you through your identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ?" This is crucial in order to have God's victory manifest in our lives.

- **Verses 11-13:** How are we to interact with the intense doctrinal truth from the earlier verses? First, we are to *reckon* it to be true. This means we are to, by faith, accept the facts as laid out by the Word of God. Specifically, we are to believe the truth that by virtue of our identification with the death and resurrection of Christ, we have "*died to sin*" and "*are alive unto God in Christ Jesus*." As the result of this monumental work of God, we are to no longer "*let sin reign in our mortal bodies*," but instead are to "*present ourselves*," that is the new life that is ours in Christ, "*to God as being alive from the dead*." We do this for that is what we are in Christ. As the magnitude of this dawns upon you, you will be quick to realize this is something we could never have hoped to accomplish on our own; but rather, is solely a provision of the grace of God.

Based upon the text of Romans Chapter 6:

Calvary is as much the foundation of sanctification as of justification. Both gifts spring from the same work and are two aspects of the same salvation.

Unknown Source

For the cross is not only the place where our sins were dealt with, but it is also the place which dealt with the sinner, each one of us. It was the place where we were given, as new creatures in Christ, the potential to live a life of *equivalent weight* to who and what we are in Christ.

Summarize and Organize

This is such powerful and important information, let's make the effort to organize and summarize it.

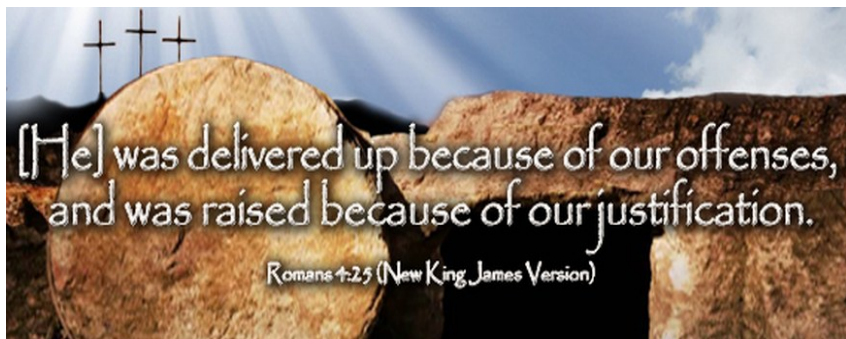
1. In the book of Romans, Paul first teaches the cross as the place of payment for our sins, "*whom God set forth as the propitiation by His blood. . .*" (Romans 3:25).
2. Then, it is also the place where the power of sin is broken and our Old Man was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be neutralized.

It is the blood for my sins and the cross for me.

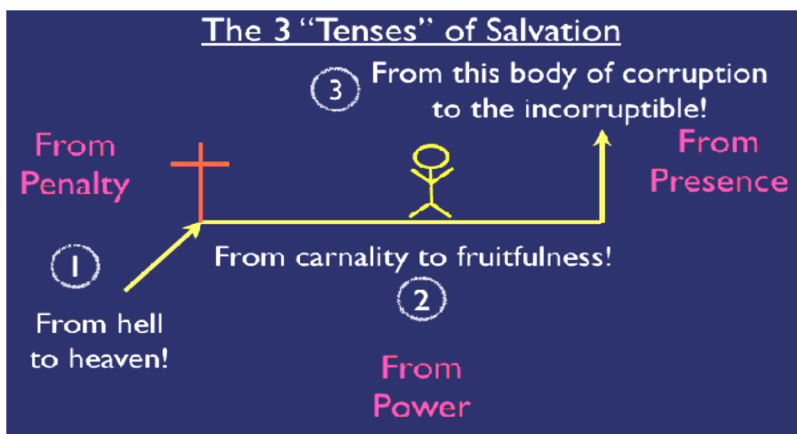
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*We may be forgiven because He died in our stead;
we may be delivered because we died with Him.*

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There is a very important connection to the three tenses of our salvation that we dare not miss. In the past, not only were we saved from hell to heaven, through faith in the person and work of Christ, but integral to this is our salvation from the penalty of sin. Now in the present, in order for each of us to avoid carnality and to bear fruit for Christ, we have the need to *be saved* from the power of sin in our lives. This is exactly what God has provided by means of identifying us with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, some glorious day in the future, we are going to be delivered from the presence of sin—the third tense of salvation—as we exchange this body of corruption for one that is incorruptible and that means without a nature to sin.



3. To assume that we have just one nature as Christians is not Scriptural and nullifies the walk of faith.

I say this because there are some famous voices in our day that teach that *true* Christians, those who are *really* born again, have just one nature. I trust you can see the immediate problem for those of us who are aware that we still have a nature to sin, and at the same time know we have trusted in Christ for our salvation. As you can imagine, confusion is likely to arise.

Those who teach a *one nature life* believe the sin nature has been eradicated and only the new remains. They need to cover the obvious fact that even *true* Christians sin now and then. (I hope you realize I am using a little bit of sanctified sarcasm). One explanation they use is to declare these moments of sin to be just *remnants* of the flesh that will soon pass.

How does this *one nature* theory line up with the Word of God? Does the Bible really teach that we need to watch out for *remnants*, but otherwise have no worries when it comes to the sin nature? On the contrary, the Bible teaches that the sin nature is a full blown adversary seeking to regain control of our lives. That is why Ephesians 4:17 says we must no longer walk according to the vanity of thinking of the lost world around us. That is why Romans Chapter 7 talks about sin living in us (as Christians) and why Galatians 5:16-17 says:

*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit,
and the Spirit against the flesh;
and these are contrary to one another ...*

Does this sound like remnants that can just be brushed aside and forgotten? It is more like a pitched battle in which defeat is a very real possibility?

Not only is this *one nature* teaching not Biblical, it also nullifies that walk of faith that is such an essential part of the Christian Life. Habakkuk 2:4 says:

... the righteous will live by his faith...

This passage is quoted three times in the New Testament. Romans 1:17 tell us that within the Gospel there is a righteousness that is "*from faith to faith*." God expects us to trust in the truth which He has revealed to us in His Word. We have an adversary within that is the flesh and an adversary without that is the world and Satan.

Ours is meant to be a walk of faith: faith in the sufficiency of the cross and the power of the Holy Spirit to hold the Old Man in the place of death, the cross; faith that the cross has already triumphed over the spiritual forces of evil. (Colossians 2:15) We are going to need to continue this walk of faith until we are finally free of the presence of sin. This will not occur until we receive our resurrection bodies, that are just like our Lord and Savior's, and we are safely in His presence for all eternity. Let me give you the full text of Galatians 2:20-21 to reinforce this point:

*I have been crucified with Christ,
and I no longer live; nevertheless,
Christ lives in me. The life which I now live
in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

In the plan of God, the power of sin is broken by means of our identification with the crucifixion of our Lord. True as this is, it only becomes reality in our lives as we:

... reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God.

This is something that we must do daily, by faith. Look again at the above passage! Paul is resting by faith in his identification with the death of Christ. Then he tells us how it is he is moving forward in the Christian life:

*The life I now live in the flesh (in my human body as a
Christian) I live by faith in the Son of God!*

By faith! Now do you see the error of *one nature* theology? To simply claim that a spiritual life is automatic for all *true* believers is to eliminate the need for daily dependence upon the truth of God's Word and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. According to the Scriptures, this is most certainly not an accurate representation of the Christian Life!

4. The previous discussion reinforces exactly what it is we are to *present* to God as delineated in Romans:

*Reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive unto God...
present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead
and your members as instruments of
righteousness to God. Romans 6:11, 13*

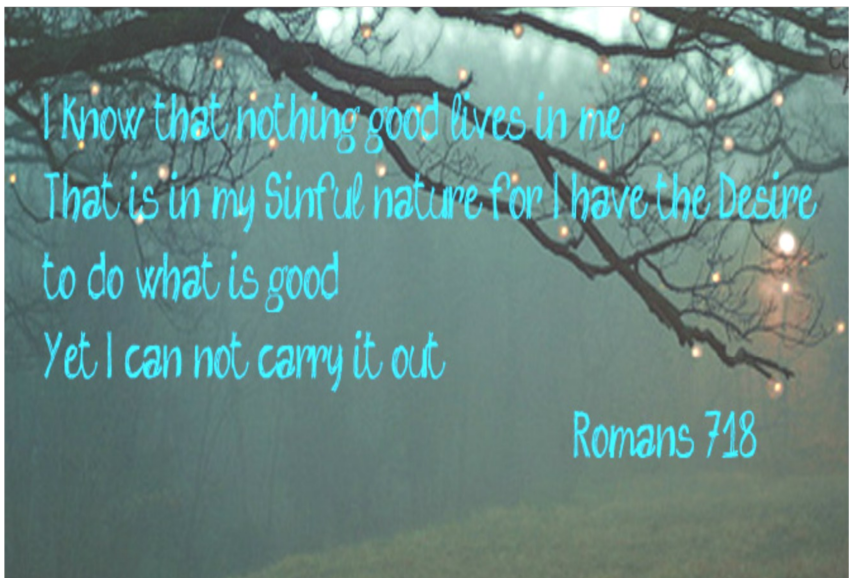
It is not the Old Man we are to present to God, for our Old Man was:

*... crucified with Him that the body of sin
might be neutralized. Romans 6:6*

We are to present to God for His use and purposes, the new man:

*... created to be like Him in true righteousness
and holiness. Ephesians 4:24*

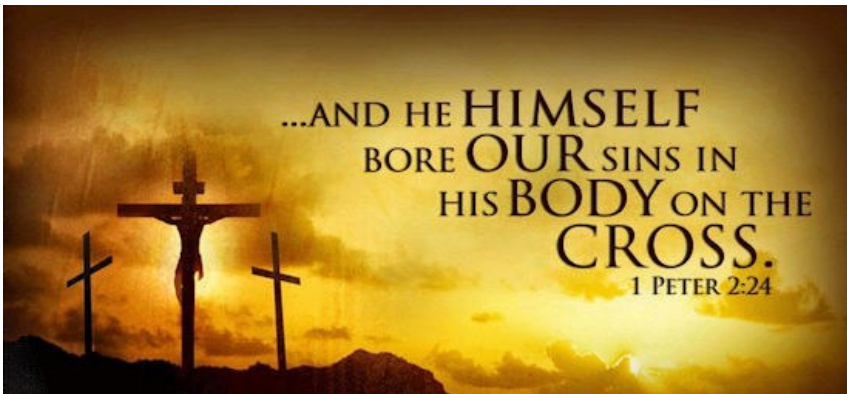
Did you know that Romans 6:13 is what it means to consecrate oneself? It is the new man in Christ that is to be consecrated and never the flesh. For in the flesh dwelleth no good thing. (Romans 7:18)



Making the Connection

Let's make sure that we connect the details of Romans Chapter 6 with our study in Ephesians Chapter 4. What does it mean to *put off* the Old Man and *put on* the new?

- **To put off the old** is to accept God's Word about our identification with His death and burial as true, and then allow the Holy Spirit to make it so in our lives. Not only did Christ bear our sins, but God also identified us with the death and burial of Christ as His gracious provision to break the power of sin in the life of every single believer. It will only become a reality in the life of each believer, one believer at a time, as he or she first of all knows these truths and then appropriates them into his or her life by faith!
- **To put on the new man** is to further accept God's Word about our identification with the resurrection of Christ, so that we too "*might walk in newness of life.*" (Romans 6:4) God has made us *new creatures in Christ.* (II Corinthians 5:17) As these new creatures, we are to reckon ourselves "*alive unto God in Christ Jesus.*" (Romans 6:11)



- If you are understanding the first two points, you should be able to predict what needs to come next.

Those who have put on the *new man* are going to need the ongoing “*renewal of their minds*” by means of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit as He sanctifies us by the truth contained in the Word of God (John 17:17). In this way, and only in this way, do we:

*Live by faith in the Son
of God who loved us
and died for us.*

Do you see the place at which we have arrived after developing the four principles based upon our study in the Book of Ephesians?



- We are new creations in Christ, having been made alive, raised up, and seated with Christ in the heavens. We now have an identity that is caught up in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We know what **not** to do with this new life. For we know to avoid walking according to the pattern of the lost, which originates in a certain kind of thinking that is empty of value and leads to a life dominated by the desires of the flesh.
- We are to present the new life that is ours in Christ to God for His use. We know that includes conforming us to the image and likeness of His Son and bringing us into His glory.
- We do this by daily and consistently taking off the old life, setting aside who we were in Adam, and then putting on the new man created to be like Christ in true righteousness and holiness. We do this as we reckon our Old Man to have been crucified with Christ. This is a matter of walking in faith in the truth of God's word and the power of the Spirit to make it so in our lives.

Why isn't this the normal practice of Christians everywhere? Good question. This is not a detailed answer, but would you consider the following:

- First, because too many are being pressured to live the Christian life before they even have the new life that is a necessary starting point. There is no Christian Life until lost persons have placed their faith in the person and work of Christ and, thereby, entered the family of God by being *born again*.
- Second, so many are trying to live the Christian life while accepting the standards of the world around them. This simply cannot be done. We are to make a distinct break with the thinking of the world, and not try to keep a foot in both camps.
- Third, far too many attempt to live the Christian Life from resources within: commitment, sincerity, will-power, and so on. It is not that such things are not commendable; it is that they are not God's way. The cross is the one means provided by God to break the power of the sin nature in the life of the believer. Self effort will never do it.
- Fourth, many mistakenly try to live the Christian Life by presenting the wrong thing to God. By that I mean, they present the Old Man to Him as if God intended to rehabilitate who we were in Adam. He wants us to consider the Old Man crucified. We are to offer the new man, who we are in Christ, and:

*... the parts of our body to Him
as instruments of righteousness.*

That is God's way! It is the only way He will enable us. As His disciples, we are called to get in step with His thoughts and His ways on each and every aspect of the Christian Life.

In Closing

Clarifying and Extending!

The four principles we have discussed from the book of Ephesians, and as amplified elsewhere, stand as a complete package. You have all you need in terms of a rich cache of truth upon which you can meditate, appropriate by faith, and thereby make great progress in terms of ongoing personal sanctification. However, there is a closely related portion of Scripture which both powerfully clarifies the things we have been learning. It is the natural conclusion to our study. Furthermore, it has been a great blessing to me, and I would like to share it with you.

Let's take a closer look at Matthew 16:24-28—read it carefully yourself; and then consider this excerpt below:

*Then Jesus said to
His disciples, "If anyone
desires to come after Me,
let him deny himself, and take
up his cross, and
follow Me. For whoever desires to
save his life will lose it, but who
ever loses his life for My sake
will find it..."*

Matthew 16:24-25

For many this is a very intimidating passage. Nor do I suspect the truths that we have been studying in the book of Ephesians readily come to mind when reading this passage. Nonetheless, by the time we are done, I think you will see that Jesus is addressing some of the same issues that Paul has been handling in Ephesians.



As for the intimidation factor, that is probably because you have heard at least one preacher use this passage as a *club* to try and get you to *toe the line, to shape up and fly right*. I know that I have. The passage deals with solemn and serious subject matter. But I trust that, by the time we are finished investigating what it has to say, you will see it as a tremendous guiding principle with respect to our new life in Christ and the worthy life we are meant to live. I will go so far as to express my hope that this passage will become something that draws, motivates, and encourages.

Understanding the Passage

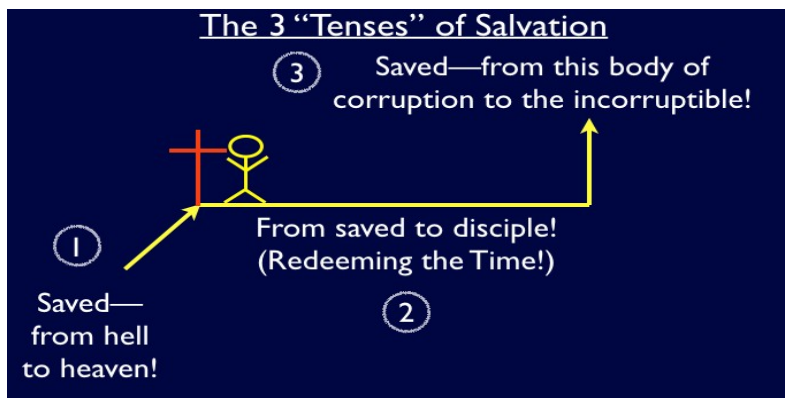
As we clarify what the passage is telling us, consider the following points:

1. **Audience:** It is essential that we begin by answering the question, “To whom are these comments of our Lord addressed?” Fortunately, the context answers that directly: “*Then Jesus said to His disciples. . .*” If you trace your way back through the previous two chapters, you will see that Peter is mentioned multiple times, and every other indication in the narrative is that Jesus has been working with the twelve.
2. **Disciples:** To be clear, let’s answer the question, “What is a disciple?” The Greek word translated disciple means one who is a learner, one who follows the teaching of another. Both rabbis and Greek philosophers alike would have had their devotees, so the word is a natural fit for those selected by Jesus for special instruction and fellowship. It is important to note that when we make use of the word disciple in terms of the church, and in a spiritual sense, we are talking about someone who has first of all placed their faith in the person and work of Christ and then are seeking to follow after Him.

Every Christian is to be a disciple! Sad to say, most of us have taken a *vacation* from time to time—some for much too long a period of time. This doesn't mean we have stopped being Christians. Being a child of God is a permanent status. But as the text of Luke 14:27 makes clear, unless we are following after Him daily, we are not disciples no matter what we call ourselves:

"... whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

3. **Guidance:** Now that we know who Jesus is talking to (His disciples), and what a disciple is, then it should be perfectly clear that Matthew 16:24-28 is guidance for the saved and not for the lost. It is not a passage about how to *get* saved, but about how to *redeem the time* as a Christian. You have seen this diagram quite a few times now; so let me point out that Jesus' admonition to His disciples is directed toward the *present tense* aspect of their salvation—Step 2.



In other words, all Christians are called to *redeem* however many days that God gives us on this earth (Ephesians 5:16), and this is naturally related to our following after Him as disciples.

This needs to be something, which garners our full attention for it doesn't come naturally.

4. **Clarification:** In Matthew 16:16, Peter is commended by our Lord for his spiritual insight into the true nature of Jesus. But then look at the admonishment contained within Matthew 16:21-23, where Jesus turns to Peter and says, “*Get behind me Satan.*” Wow! It is pretty clear that at that point Peter is completely out of touch with the plans and purposes of God. In fact, Peter had been advocating a course of action in direct opposition to God's plan.
5. **Struggle:** This is exactly the struggle we face as disciples and that we have been learning about in the book of Ephesians. We have been given new life in Christ, and we have learned there is a calling upon that life. One way to summarize that calling is to remember the words of Jesus:

“... deny self and take up your cross!”

Peter needed this advice, and we need it! By the time we have a full understanding of what that means, we are going to find this advice to be very enlightening!

Saving and Losing One's Life

Before directly addressing the commands contained in Matthew 16:24, look at the narrative regarding saving and losing one's life in Matthew 16:25-26.

*“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.
For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole
world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man
give in exchange for his soul?”*

The key word in the passage is the Greek word *psuche*. It is found four times—translated twice as *life* and twice as *soul*. Soul is the preferred translation of this word for it refers to the essence of a person—the sum of personality, intellect, emotions, affections, and so on.

In some ways the thinkers of Jesus' day were more advanced than those of our day. For Hebrew, Greek, and Roman philosophers—all three cultures—recognized that the real essence of a person was in the soul. They also recognized that the soul could not be reduced to simply biological life. All three groups discussed and cared deeply about what happened to the soul when biological life ended—something I wish people in our day spent more time pondering!

Let's talk about the idea of *saving* one's life. The Greek word translated *save* carries no intrinsic connotation of saving from hell to heaven, but rather from some situation of danger to one of deliverance. In various Biblical texts this word is used to deliver from sickness, from physical dangers, from mistakes, and, of course, from an eternity in the Lake of Fire.

At issue is the specific focus in our passage. I think that without question this is talking about delivering the second tense of the Christian Life—the days the Lord has given us on this earth as a believer. To save one's life is equivalent to *redeeming the time*. That means to squander our life in carnality and worldly pursuits would be to *lose it* with respect to God's intended purpose.



Jesus is saying there is something big at stake for every Christian—something related to how one chooses to spend or order his or her life as a Christian. It is so significant that it can be equated to *saving* or *losing* one's life with respect to whether or not one is a disciple of Jesus.

In context, Jesus is talking about the quality of our Christian Life. What is the immediate context of Verse 24? It is, first of all, *to* disciples—those who are already saved. Second, it clearly brings into focus the lordship of Christ in our lives—*deny self and follow Him!* This fits perfectly with the focus of Ephesians which begins with having new life in Christ and then develops what it means to live a life that is *worthy* of who we are in Christ.

But, the call to salvation is not a call to follow, it is a call to *look* and *believe!* (John 3:15) It is only after an individual has new life, and a marvelous position in Christ, that the call is given to *walk worthy of the calling you have received.* Or, in the words of Jesus *deny self, take up your cross and follow me!* We are going to see that these verses are saying something very similar and that they offer two perspectives on the life we live as Christians.

Avoiding the Error

I emphasize this because there is an error that has been widely promulgated for some time that goes something like this: To be saved from an eternal destiny in hell to one in heaven, you must fully respond to the Lordship of Christ. You must not only believe but also totally submit, totally surrender to Him in order to be saved.

This may sound good and right, but there is one insurmountable problem to this false gospel. It is asking a spiritually dead person to be committed. It is asking for a response from the flesh to surrender, which naturally is the only source from which a lost person can respond. It is asking a lost person to do something that you and I, as saved individuals, struggle to do. How dare we put this kind of a stumbling block in front of a lost person, when we ourselves are not able to do it? How dare we modify the precious Gospel of grace in this way.

Let me say this as clearly as possible! The only surrender, the only commitment that God has in mind with respect to

the lost is for them to recognize the commitment of the Son of God in going to the cross in their place. It is His surrender of His place of honor in heaven, His coming to this earth, His taking on the likeness of man for the express purpose of going to the cross that He might bear our sin, satisfy the just demands of God for judgment, and thereby provide a means for us to be reconciled to our heavenly Father. I stand amazed at His surrender and His commitment. In contrast, we have absolutely nothing to bring to the table.

This error is sometimes described in this way—if Jesus is not Lord of all, than He is not your Lord at all! I am amazed at how much traction such statements can gain among Christians when they are so easily refuted after 30 seconds of reflection. Was Peter totally committed in Matthew 26:33? He said:

Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.

Surely sounds like it. How about a few verses later when the scripture tells us his actions following Jesus' arrest:

Then he [Peter] began to call down curses on himself



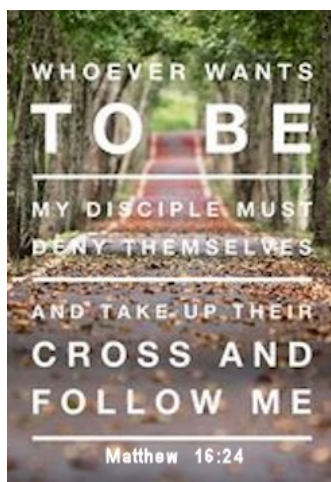
How quickly commitment from the flesh fails. How quickly our surrender is *taken* back! Do you know that in the theological system I described above, they would be forced to say that Peter was never saved. Scripturally, you will have an impossible time with that.

Here is the real problem. Peter made a commitment to accomplish a spiritual work whose source was his own strength. When you do that, you can count on the same outcome every time—failure! You may surrender to great fanfare, but the flesh will always take it back. Don't succumb to this error! It leads to all kinds of guilt when you find out you can't live up to your surrender. Guilt, because commitment is their condition for salvation, and such failure typically leads to a massive cover-up or deep despair. God's grace plan of salvation is nowhere to be found.

Let me repeat what I have said before to add a point of balance to the above comments. To speak against a thing wrongly taught is not to be altogether against it when it is in its proper Biblical place. As we get into Matthew 16:24, we are going to see the intended Lordship of Christ in the life of every believer taught as clearly and powerfully as it is possible to do so. Jesus desires to be the sole Lord of every Christian's

life. He wants both our surrender and our commitment. If He does not have it, then we have checked out of being a disciple no matter how many of the motions we might be going through, no matter how great our church attendance.

If Christ is not progressively becoming Lord of every aspect of your life, then you are not developing as a disciple. The difference between rightly understanding this and getting it wrong will come directly from the text in Matthew 16.



Taking up the Cross

What about *denying self* and *taking up our cross*? This is the most important aspect of what I have to share with you. First, let's talk about what it is not. There is a tendency to treat *taking up one's cross* as some condition or circumstance in our lives. You might be surprised at my insistence to the contrary. But *taking up your cross* has nothing to do with some kind of medical condition, a difficult situation at work, or even a spouse, who from time to time, has been a great trial!

You may be equally surprised when I tell you that it is very unlikely that Jesus was referring to His going to the cross. Although Jesus tells His disciples He is going to suffer and die at the hands of the religious leaders in Matthew 16:21, He does not tell them by what means. Furthermore, they would not have thought of crucifixion at the hands of the Pharisees. In fact, the cross is not specifically mentioned until Chapter 20. (Matthew 20:19)

To what then is Jesus referring? All of Jesus' disciples would be familiar with the Roman practice of crucifixion and would have seen it. I think it most likely that Jesus is drawing attention to the Roman custom of having a condemned man carry part of his cross—usually the top piece—as a mark of submission to Roman authority. In essence, the message was this: I went my own way as a criminal, in rebellion to the law of the land, and now I am suffering the consequences. This cross I carry is a mark of my submission to the authority of Rome.

The spiritual parallel to this should fairly leap off the page for us. We learned in Romans 6:13 that we are to “present our new life to Christ. . .and the members of our body to Him.” It is this submission to God's authority that Jesus is calling for on the part of His disciples. To *take up one's cross* is to submit to God's calling on one's life—whatever that calling might be.

For Christ, it was to go to a real cross in order to redeem fallen mankind. For Hudson Taylor, it was to go to China. For Adoniram Judson, it was to go to Burma. For you and me, it is going to be something altogether different.

The important thing to see is that Jesus' words in Matthew Chapter 16 are another aspect of what it means to reckon ourselves dead to sin, alive unto God, and then to present that new life to God in order that He might accomplish His plans and purposes through us.

Connections and Applications

But what about the idea to *deny self*? Let me try to tie this together for you.

The Fall of Man. Let me remind you of the disaster that occurred in the Garden of Eden. It starts with God making a clear declaration to Adam.

*"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;
but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge
of good and evil, for when you eat of it
you will surely die." Genesis 2:17*

Satan gave an alternative version of the truth. In other words, Satan lied.

*You will not surely die,
the serpent said to
the woman.
For God knows that
when you eat of it your
eyes will be opened, and
you will be like God,
knowing good and evil.*



The text notes that Eve observed

*... the fruit was good for food, pleasing to the eye,
and desirable for gaining wisdom, and so*

It wasn't that she was hungry. Rather, she felt the allure of Satan's lie. Eve gave the fruit to Adam, who also ate. This led to the immediate spiritual death (separation) of Adam and Eve from God followed by eventual physical death. In fact, even this world in which we live has come under judgment as the result of their sin.

Think this through carefully. Was their act of eating a sin? Of course, they disobeyed a direct commandment of God. But, was it an evil deed? By that I mean, are we dealing with an intrinsically immoral or evil act in the eating of that fruit?

I want you to consider that the answer to this second question is "No!" Adam and Eve were able to eat from any other tree in the garden, so clearly eating fruit was not of itself a sin. It wasn't until God gave specific direction to refrain from eating from this particular tree, that doing so became a sin. Think of it this way. Is eating shrimp a sin? Only if you are an orthodox Jew. Is going to Tarshish a sin? Only if you are Jonah and have been told by God to go to Nineveh.

What I want you to see is that the fall of man resulted from taking action independent to the revealed will of God. It was disobeying God that was the sin, rather than a patently immoral, or intrinsically evil act.

Our Lessons. Now recall what we have gleaned from our study of Ephesians:

- In Christ we have new life and an identity intimately related to Him.
- We have been taught what not to do with this new life. We are not to live according to the pattern of this world, in particular its empty viewpoint of life.
- We have learned what to do. We are to present the new life within to God and our bodies to Him as instru-

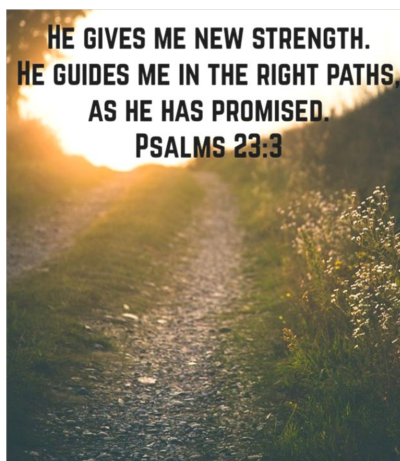
- We have learned how to present our new life. We accomplish this by taking off the Old Man (reckoning it neutralized by our union with Christ's death on the cross), being renewed in our thinking through the intake of God's Word as taught by His Spirit, and putting on the new life by reckoning ourselves alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

Does this process cover the temptation to sin? Absolutely! Our ability to resist sin is part of taking off the Old Man and putting on the new. It is part of not following after the lusts of this world. But there is still one more aspect we need to address.

Our Volition. What about the issue of the independent exercise of our wills within the context of the Christian Life? I am not talking about giving into the temptation to sin, I am talking about choosing to go our own way—to live independently of God's call on our life. It is this issue that Jesus wants to address in every single Gospel account (Matthew 16, Mark 8, Luke 9, John 12).

Here is how I would explain Matthew 16:24: In order to be a follower of Jesus, a disciple, we need to:

- ***Deny ourselves.*** That means to give up the independent control of our lives—time, treasure, and talent.
- ***Take up our cross.*** Put ourselves under submission to the authority of Christ. In particular, submit to His calling on our lives.
- ***Follow Jesus.*** We are not following Him unless we are living in obedience to His call on our lives, no matter how moral our lives might otherwise be.



Understanding. I hope the *light bulb* of understanding is turning on and this will help. Ask yourself, “What would it have looked like for Adam and Eve to deny themselves and take up their cross in order to follow after the Lord who came and met with them in the cool of the day on a daily basis? Perhaps it would have been Eve saying:

*“It looks good for food and appeals to my eye;
but no-no, I am going to deny my attraction to it.
Serpent, I hear what you are saying, but I am going to
submit to God’s calling on my life to tend the garden
and avoid this tree. I am going to depend upon Him
to provide all that I need. I am going to submit to the
authority of my Creator rather than an alternative
message from anyone else, and I am going
to deny the desires of my own heart.”*

Would this denying and cross-carrying, and by that I mean dependent submission to God, have made any difference in the Garden? They would have given up the free expression of their will, but they would have kept their spiritual relationship intact—to say nothing about the change in consequences for mankind through the ages.

That is exactly what Matthew 16:25-f is talking about. To deny self and take up one’s cross, and by that I mean dependent submission to God’s will, is what it means to lose one’s life. It means to lose independent exercise of our will in favor of giving our lives to the Lord for His use. Everyone who has ever done so knows that this type of submission is indeed saving the life!

Too often we approach the Christian Life as follows: “I have trusted Christ, and I am going to stay away from sinful temptation, but the rest of my life is mine to live the way I see fit.” This is not the mind-set of a disciple. What’s at stake from a spiritual perspective is whether or not we are going to save or lose our lives—redeem the time and be fruitful or squander the production that could have occurred.

Two Examples

To illustrate my point, I provide two examples, one from the Book of John and one from II Corinthians.

From John. Consider the narrative of John 12:23-28. This is one of the parallel accounts to Matthew 16:24. If I have explained Matthew 16:24 properly, you are going to stand back in amazement at the illustration to be found in this chapter of John. For Jesus is not just telling us what to do, He is first going to model it for us. The humility of the second person of the Trinity is truly incomparable!

But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify



A full analysis of this passage is beyond the scope of the application I am trying to make, but consider the following items directly applicable to our discussion:

- Notice that the issue of losing and saving one's life is again in view. In this context, there is no doubt that it is talking about whether or not one is obedient to the will of God with respect to life. For Jesus is the grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies. He has chosen obedience to the will of the Father in spite of the fact that it means His death. This is an exact parallel with denying self and taking up one's cross, that is submitting to the call of the Father on one's life. For Jesus, it was going to the cross to die in our place. For you and me, the call is something much less, but nonetheless it is a call for submission to the Father's will.
- To reinforce the clarity with which Christ understands God's call on His life, consider the following passages of Scripture:

*"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me,
and to finish His work."* John 4:34

*"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do
nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do;
for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."*
John 5:19

*"For I have come down from heaven not to do My own
will, but the will of Him who sent Me."* John 6:38

Not only did Jesus understand God's call on His life, but He submitted Himself to it. In terms of Matthew 16:24, Jesus had already spent His time on this earth *denying Himself and taking up His cross* before He ever went to Calvary's cross. If we are going to truly be His followers, we need to understand God's call upon us to do the very same thing!

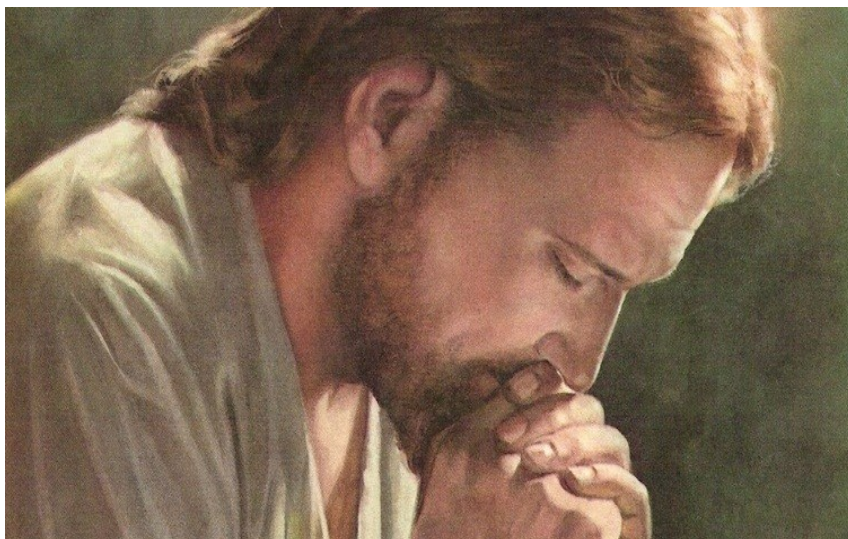
II Corinthians. By way of applying this very lesson, let's consider whether or not Paul understood it. Look at what he said regarding his own call to ministry:

We who live are always delivered over to death for Jesus sake, that the life of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." II Corinthians 4:11-12

Do you again see the very issue of life out of death—Paul making sacrifices in order to engage in ministry (delivered over to death) that life might result (the life of Christ manifest in his life). Ministry demands sacrifice, but the results are eternal in nature.

This causes me to simply ask myself, and you, the following question, "Does the use of my time, talents, and gifts—the very life choices I make—bear the mark of the cross?"

They must! For this is the mark of a disciple of Jesus Christ, and this is the call on the life of every child of God.



Epilogue

The Word of God is a source of comprehensive truth. It covers every single aspect of the Christian Life, it is all we need for matters of faith and practice, and there is not one single area in which it fails to furnish all that is needed by the child of God to navigate this earthly life. It is also a source of integrated truth, The breadth of its teaching fits together in the most marvelous harmony. There are no contradictions, no competing theories, no separate schools of thought.

One must learn how to balance truth and make proper application, but as we study line by line, precept upon precept, we will find the most marvelous structure of truth coming together in our souls. This is exactly what God intends. For it is His intent that we would be:

... sanctified by the truth—thy Word is truth!
John 17:17

I am not sure I could give you a better example of this than the way the truths we have uncovered in our study of Ephesians have taught us so much about the Christian Life. At the risk of too much repetition, let me close by reminding you what we have learned.

- It is in Christ and Him alone that we have new life. This new life is a gift to us from God that we receive as part of His plan of salvation. It is received as the result of placing our faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ: His person—in that He is the Son of God who took on humanity and *dwelt among us*; His work—in that He went to the cross in order to bear our sins, receive the wrath of God in our place, and thereby satisfy the justice of God that whosoever believeth in Him would no longer perish but have eternal life.

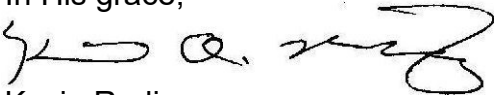
- This new life is just the beginning of the discovery of *every spiritual blessing* that is ours in Christ. It includes being so intimately identified with Christ that we share His Sonship, we share His inheritance, and we share His acceptance by the Father.
- With this kind of standing, it is no wonder that God calls us to live a new kind of life—one that on His scales, would be of *equivalent weight* to who and what we are in Christ. We are called to live lives whereby we no longer think as the world does, walk in its footsteps, or share the futility of its thoughts.
- We are called to *present* this new life to God as those alive from the dead. For that is exactly what we are. This new life is to be enabled by the Spirit of Christ and guided by the Word of God. What a blessing for the child of God to know that *sin will not be our master for we are not under Law but grace*.



- We are only able to present this new life to God for His purposes as we daily *put off* the Old Man, *renew our minds* through the truth of God's Word—specifically, as it relates to our position in Christ and His provision for dealing not only with the penalty of sin but its power. Then *putting on the new man* which is in the mold of the very life of Christ.
- It is not hard to measure whether or not we are presenting ourselves to God for His purposes, and whether or not we are putting off the Old Man and walking in accord with the new. For to do so means we are denying the independent use of our time, talents, and resources; and instead, submitting to the authority of God's call on our lives—whatever it might be at that particular time and place.

Blessed are they who understand these things and walk in them. May this imperfect work help you to do so by taking you to, and grounding you in, the truth of God's Word preserved for us.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Redig', with a stylized, cursive script.

Kevin Redig



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