

QUIT DRAGGING AROUND THE DEAD MAN

The Stench of the Dead Man is Defiling Your Freedom

QUIT DRAGGING AROUND THE DEAD MAN

The Stench of the Dead Man is Defiling Your Freedom

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD: The Corpse We Refuse to Bury

INTRODUCTION: The Dead Man in the Room

PART ONE: THE DEATH YOU'VE ALREADY DIED

Chapter 1: Co-Crucified — The Death That Happened to You

Chapter 2: The Anatomy of the Old Man

Chapter 3: Why the Old Man Had to Die

Chapter 4: Buried with Him

PART TWO: THE RESURRECTION YOU'VE ALREADY RECEIVED

Chapter 5: Raised with Christ — The New Life That Found You

Chapter 6: New Creation — What You Actually Are

Chapter 7: Christ in You — The Mystery Revealed

Chapter 8: From Slaves to Sons

PART THREE: THE DEAD MAN WE KEEP DRAGGING AROUND

Chapter 9: Why We Exhume What God Has Buried

Chapter 10: The Weight of Dragging a Corpse

Chapter 11: Spiritual Necromancy — Trying to Resurrect What God Killed

Chapter 12: The Lies We Tell Ourselves

PART FOUR: LIVING FROM THE NEW CREATION

Chapter 13: Reckoning Yourself Dead

Chapter 14: Putting On the New Self

Chapter 15: Walking in the Spirit vs. Dragging the Flesh

Chapter 16: Abiding — The Posture of the New Creation

PART FIVE: THE FREEDOM OF LETTING THE DEAD STAY DEAD

Chapter 17: What Happens When You Finally Let Go

Chapter 18: The Ongoing Renewal

Chapter 19: When You Stop Dragging the Dead Man

CONCLUSION: Burial and Resurrection — The Final Act: Leaving the Tomb Empty

FOREWORD

The Corpse We Refuse to Bury

I've been a firefighter, a pastor, and a chaplain. I've pulled bodies from burning buildings and sat with families in their worst moments. I know what death looks like. I know what death smells like. And I know this: the dead don't argue about being dead. They don't negotiate. They don't try to prove they still have some life left in them.

Only the living drag corpses around.

For years, I dragged mine everywhere. Into the pulpit. Into my prayer closet. Into my attempts at ministry. Into my relationships. I'd stand before congregations preaching resurrection while hauling the stinking remains of my old self behind me like Marley's chains. I proclaimed "new creation" on Sunday mornings while spending Monday through Saturday trying to resuscitate what God had already killed.

I performed spiritual CPR on a corpse that had been dead since the moment Christ said, "It is finished."

The crazy part? I thought that's what I was supposed to do. I thought "dying to self" meant a daily execution. I thought "taking up my cross" meant crucifying myself over and over again. I thought sanctification was the long, exhausting process of trying to murder what God had already buried with Christ.

Nobody told me the old man was already dead.

Or if they did, I didn't believe them.

Because if he's really dead, then what have I been dragging around all these years? What's that familiar weight I've grown so accustomed to carrying? What's that stench I've learned to live with, assuming it was just the smell of "dying to self"?

It's decomposition, not devotion.

Here's the central paradox that should haunt every Christian: We celebrate Easter Sunday—the resurrection, the empty tomb, the risen Christ—but we live like it's still Friday afternoon. We sing "He Is Risen" while treating ourselves like we're still in the grave. We acknowledge our new creation status in our theology but operate from our old identity in our day-to-day lives.

We're like the women at the tomb, showing up with burial spices for a corpse that's not there anymore.

"Why do you seek the living among the dead?" the angels asked them.

Why do we?

Why do we keep returning to the tomb of our old identity? Why do we insist on mourning what God has already buried? Why do we treat our resurrection as theoretical while our crucifixion feels overwhelmingly practical?

We say we believe in new creation. We quote 2 Corinthians 5:17 at baptisms and celebrations. We testify to being "born again." We sing about being made new. But then we spend the rest of our lives trying to improve, manage, suppress, and control the very thing God declared dead and buried with Christ.

We're graveyard gardeners, tending to tombs that should be empty.

We're spiritual archaeologists, constantly digging up what God has put to rest.

We're religious embalmers, preserving what was meant to decay.

And we're exhausted.

Exhausted from the weight of dragging around a dead man. Exhausted from the shame of who we used to be. Exhausted from the performance required to hide the fact that we haven't really believed our old self is gone. Exhausted from trying to be "dead to sin" by our own effort instead of simply acknowledging that we already are.

The stench of the dead man is defiling our freedom.

We were meant to walk in resurrection life—light, free, alive in Christ. Instead, we're trudging through our days bent under the weight of a corpse we refuse to bury, leaving a trail of death behind us while wondering why we can't seem to produce life.

This book is about finally letting go.

It's about believing what God said actually happened to you at the cross. It's about the radical act of trusting that when Christ died, you died. When He was buried, you were buried. When He rose, you rose. And the old you—the one you keep trying to fix, improve, manage, or suppress—is gone.

Not dying. Not mostly dead. Not in need of daily re-crucifixion.

Dead.

Buried.

Gone.

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me," Paul wrote. Not "Christ is helping me live." Not "Christ is improving my living." Not "Christ is making my old self better."

The old "I" died. Christ is the new "I."

This is not a book about trying harder to kill your flesh. It's about stopping your attempts to resurrect it. It's not about how to become a new creation. It's about how to live from the reality that you already are one.

It's time to quit dragging around the dead man.

It's time to leave the tomb empty.

It's time to stop living like it's Friday when Christ has already given us Sunday.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come.

The question is: will you believe it?

INTRODUCTION

THE DEAD MAN IN THE ROOM

There's a corpse in the room, and we're all pretending not to notice.

We step around it. We spray air freshener to mask the smell. We've gotten so used to its presence that we've almost convinced ourselves it's normal to have a dead body propped up in the corner of our spiritual lives. We've made peace with the stench.

But every now and then—in a moment of honest prayer, in the quiet after another failed attempt at victory, in the exhaustion of yet another cycle of sin and shame—we catch a whiff of death and wonder: *Is this really what the abundant life is supposed to smell like?*

The corpse is the old man. The self that was crucified with Christ. The identity that died when you were born again. And somehow, despite everything Scripture says about him being dead and buried, we keep dragging him around, trying to manage him, trying to improve him, trying to make him presentable for church.

We're living with a theological truth we affirm but don't actually believe.

THE THEOLOGICAL TRUTH WE AFFIRM

Ask any Bible-believing Christian about their identity in Christ, and they'll give you the right answers:

We know about our co-crucifixion with Christ. Romans 6:6 is familiar territory: "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin." We've heard the sermons. We've sung the songs. "When I survey the wondrous cross..." We affirm that something happened to us *at the cross*, not just *because of the cross*.

We confess our new creation status. 2 Corinthians 5:17 shows up on greeting cards and coffee mugs: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." We quote it at baptisms. We celebrate it in testimonies. We declare it boldly: "I am a new creation!"

We acknowledge the completion of the old covenant. Hebrews 8:13 tells us plainly: "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear." We understand—at least intellectually—that the old system is finished. Done. Over. The law served its purpose, but Christ fulfilled it.

We have all the right theology.

We can articulate substitutionary atonement, justification by faith, and positional sanctification. We understand the difference between the old covenant and the new. We can explain union with Christ, co-crucifixion, and resurrection life.

On paper, we've got it down.

But in practice? That's a different story.

THE PRACTICAL REALITY WE LIVE

Here's what actually happens in the day-to-day trenches of Christian living:

We keep returning to old patterns—not because we're weak, but because we're trying to manage a corpse. We wake up determined to "die to self" today. We resolve to "crucify the flesh." We commit to "putting off the old man." And by 10 a.m., we're exhausted from trying to kill what God already killed. By noon, we've failed again. By evening, we're drowning in shame, convinced that if we just tried harder tomorrow, maybe we could finally get this death thing right.

We treat our old self like a chronic illness that needs daily management instead of a deceased identity that needs burial.

We're exhausted from dragging around what should be buried. Like ancient Egyptians preserving mummies, we've become experts at embalming the old man. We wrap him carefully in religious activity. We perfume him with spiritual disciplines. We prop him up with accountability structures. We display him in Christian service. And we wonder why, despite all our efforts, he still stinks.

The weight of maintaining a dead identity is crushing. We're bent under the load of:

- Constant self-monitoring ("Am I dead enough to self today?")
- Endless performance metrics ("If I were really crucified with Christ, I wouldn't struggle with this")
- Chronic guilt ("Why can't I stay dead?")
- Perpetual shame ("Everyone else seems to have their flesh under control")
- Religious striving ("Maybe if I pray more, fast more, serve more, I can finally kill this thing")

We're trying to improve what God has already declared dead. This is where it gets truly absurd. God says, "That old man was crucified with Christ—past tense, finished, done." And we respond with, "Okay, but how do I make him better? How do I train him? How do I manage him? How do I keep him under control?"

It's like trying to teach a corpse table manners.

We've created an entire Christian industry around improving the old man:

- "Seven Steps to Dying to Self"
- "How to Crucify Your Flesh Daily"
- "Ten Ways to Make Your Old Man Behave"
- "The Discipline of Death to Self"

We're offering CPR to a corpse and calling it discipleship.

Here's the brutal truth: you cannot improve what God has killed. You cannot rehabilitate what Christ has crucified. You cannot manage what the Spirit has declared dead. The old man doesn't need better behavior modification techniques. He needs a funeral.

But we won't give him one. Because somewhere deep down, we don't really believe he's dead. We think we need him. We think maybe—with enough effort, enough discipline, enough crucifying—we can turn him into something useful. We think resurrection means resuscitating the old instead of receiving the new.

And so we keep dragging the corpse around, surprised when it produces death instead of life.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS (AND ISN'T)

Before we go any further, let me be crystal clear about what you're holding in your hands.

This is NOT another "try harder" self-improvement program. You've had enough of those. You've read the books with the three-step plans and the five keys to victory. You've attended the conferences with the breakthrough formulas. You've listened to the sermons that left you motivated for three days and defeated for the next three months. This is not that. I'm not going to give you a new technique for managing your flesh or a fresh strategy for crucifying yourself. This book is about stopping all of that.

This is NOT a denial of ongoing sanctification. I'm not suggesting that growth, transformation, and progressive holiness aren't real or important. They are. But here's the

difference: sanctification is the process of becoming in experience what you already are in identity. It's the new creation being renewed, not the old creation being reformed. It's transformation FROM a new nature, not transformation TO a new nature. We'll unpack this distinction throughout the book, but don't mistake grace for passivity or freedom for license.

This IS a recognition that resurrection requires death. You can't have Easter without Good Friday. You can't experience resurrection life while clinging to what was crucified. You can't put on the new self while dragging around the old. The gospel includes death—real death, your death, in Christ. Until you believe that death actually happened, you'll keep trying to experience resurrection through self-effort, which is like trying to roll away the stone from the inside of the tomb.

This IS an invitation to stop resuscitating what Christ has crucified. Every moment you spend trying to improve, manage, or suppress the old man is a moment you're not living from your new identity. Every ounce of energy you pour into spiritual CPR is energy you're not receiving Christ's life. Every religious attempt to "die to self" is actually an attempt to resurrect self and make it the hero of your sanctification story.

It's time to stop.

Stop the performance. Stop the striving. Stop the exhausting cycle of crucifying what's already dead. Stop dragging around the corpse of who you used to be and start living from the reality of who you are.

"The Christian life is not a changed life but an exchanged life," Ian Thomas said. And he was right. God isn't in the business of helping you improve your old self. He killed it. Buried it. And gave you an entirely new life—Christ's life—in exchange.

The question this book forces you to confront is simple but devastating: Do you believe that?

Do you believe your old self is actually dead, or are you just giving theological lip service to the idea while functionally living like he's sick but manageable?

Do you believe you're a new creation, or do you think you're still the old creation trying really hard to act new?

Do you believe it is no longer you who live but Christ who lives in you, or are you still convinced that the Christian life is about you living better for Christ?

THE DEAD MAN IN THE ROOM

Here's what we're going to do in the pages ahead:

Part One examines the death you've already died. We're going to look at what actually happened to you when Christ was crucified. Not what you wish happened. Not what you're trying to make happen. What God says happened. We'll explore the anatomy of the old man, why he had to die, and what it means that he's been buried with Christ.

Part Two celebrates the resurrection you've already received. You're not waiting to become a new creation someday. You are one now. We'll unpack what it means that Christ lives in you, that you've been raised with Him, and that your identity has been fundamentally transformed from slave to son.

Part Three confronts the dead man we keep dragging around. This is where we get painfully honest about why we exhume what God has buried, what it costs us to maintain a dead identity, and how our attempts at spiritual necromancy keep us in bondage to the very thing Christ freed us from.

Part Four shows us how to live from our new creation. This isn't about techniques or formulas. It's about reckoning ourselves dead, putting on the new self, walking in the Spirit, and abiding in Christ—not as ways to become alive but as ways to live from the life we've already been given.

Part Five explores the freedom of finally letting the dead stay dead. What happens when you stop dragging the corpse? What does it look like to live from acceptance instead of fear? How does resurrection life actually work when you're not constantly fighting to maintain death?

The corpse is in the room. We've all been stepping around it, pretending it's normal, making excuses for the smell.

But what if the stench you've learned to live with isn't the cost of discipleship? What if it's the evidence of unbelief? What if the dead man you're trying so hard to manage isn't supposed to be there at all?

What if freedom isn't found in controlling the corpse but in finally admitting it's dead?

It's time to address the dead man in the room.

It's time to quit dragging him around.

It's time to believe what God said and bury what Christ crucified.

The old has passed away. The new has come. Will you live like it?

PART ONE: THE DEATH YOU'VE ALREADY DIED

CHAPTER 1

Co-Crucified — The Death That Happened to You

"knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin" — Romans 6:6 (NASB)

The verb tense matters.

In fact, it changes everything.

Romans 6:6 doesn't say your old self *is being* crucified, as if it's a process you're working through. It doesn't say your old self *needs to be* crucified, as if it's your responsibility to make it happen. It doesn't even say your old self *will be* crucified, as if it's a future event you're waiting for.

It says your old self **was** crucified.

Past tense. Completed action. Done deal.

The Greek word is *sustauroo*—"crucified together with." And the tense is aorist passive indicative. Without turning this into a Greek lecture, here's what that means: this is a one-time, completed action that was done *to* you, not *by* you. You didn't make it happen. You didn't volunteer for it. You didn't achieve it through spiritual disciplines or religious performance.

It happened to you when Christ was crucified.

You were included in His death.

This is the most important truth you'll never quite believe: **when Jesus died, you died.** Not metaphorically. Not symbolically. Not aspirationally. Actually. Really. Truly.

Your old self—the you that existed outside of Christ, the you that was enslaved to sin, the you that was dead in trespasses, the you that was under the law—was executed at Calvary.

And you weren't even there.

At least, not consciously. You didn't volunteer. You didn't sign up. You didn't achieve the required level of spiritual maturity to qualify for crucifixion. Two thousand years ago, when Roman soldiers drove nails through the wrists and feet of a Jewish rabbi outside Jerusalem, something happened to you that you had no control over.

You died.

THE DEATH YOU DIDN'T CHOOSE

This offends our sense of autonomy. We want to be the heroes of our own spiritual stories. We want credit for our death to self. We want to stand before God someday and say, "Look how hard I worked at dying! See how committed I was to crucifying my flesh! Check out my discipline in taking up my cross!"

But Paul won't let us have that.

"Knowing this," he writes. Not "achieving this" or "working toward this" or "striving for this." Knowing it. Recognizing it. Acknowledging what has already taken place.

Your old self was *crucified* with Him.

This is as past tense as the resurrection. As finished as "It is finished." As complete as the tearing of the temple veil. When Christ died on that cross, the old you died with Him. Not because you were so spiritual. Not because you tried so hard. But because God, in His sovereign grace, included you in Christ's death.

You were in Him.

This is the scandal of union with Christ. Everything that happened to Jesus happened to you *in* Him. His death was your death. His burial was your burial. His resurrection was your resurrection. His ascension was your ascension. His seating at the right hand of the Father is your seating.

The entire redemptive work of Christ wasn't just *for* you; it was also *as* you.

When the Father looked at the cross, He didn't just see His Son dying for sinners. He saw sinners dying in His Son. He saw you there. Your old identity. Your sin nature. Your slavery to the flesh. Your life under the law. All of it—executed, finished, buried.

"The cross is the lightning rod of grace that short-circuits God's wrath to Christ so that only the light of His love remains for believers," A.W. Tozer said. That's substitution—Christ taking your place, bearing your punishment, absorbing God's wrath so you don't have to. And that's glorious.

But Romans 6 is talking about something even more radical than substitution. It's talking about **identification**. Christ didn't just die *for* you so you could keep trying to manage your old self. He died *as* you so your old self would be crucified with Him.

Substitution says, "Christ died in your place." Identification says, "You died in Christ."

Both are true. Both are necessary. But we've focused so much on substitution that we've missed identification. We've celebrated what Christ did *for us* while ignoring what happened *to us* in Christ.

And because we've missed it, we keep trying to crucify what's already been crucified.

CRUCIFIED, NOT WOUNDED

Here's where we need to get brutally honest: the old man isn't sick. He's not wounded. He's not in need of rehabilitation or therapy or better behavior modification strategies.

He's dead.

Crucifixion isn't a recovery process. It's an execution method. The Roman cross wasn't designed to injure—it was designed to kill. Slowly, publicly, shamefully, thoroughly. When someone was crucified, there was no question about the outcome. They didn't go to the cross for a near-death experience. They went to die.

And that's exactly what happened to your old self.

The problem is, we've treated crucifixion like chemotherapy—a painful treatment designed to weaken the disease so we can manage it better. We think of "dying to self" as the process of suppressing our sinful desires, controlling our flesh, and keeping our old nature in check.

But that's not what Romans 6:6 says.

It says the old self *was crucified* "in order that our body of sin might be done away with." The phrase "done away with" is the Greek word *katargeō*—to render inactive, to make powerless, to nullify, to abolish. It doesn't mean "weakened" or "improved" or "under better management." It means destroyed. Rendered inoperative. Put out of commission.

Your old self was crucified so that the power of sin in your life would be broken.

Not managed. Broken. Not controlled. Destroyed. Not improved. Abolished.

"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die," Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote. And he wasn't talking about a daily crucifixion where you wake up each morning and kill yourself again. He was talking about the fundamental call of the gospel: die with Christ so you can live with Christ.

You can't live the resurrection life while resuscitating the crucified life.

THE PURPOSE OF YOUR DEATH

Paul is clear about why this death had to happen: "so that we would no longer be slaves to sin."

Your old self's relationship to sin was slavery. Not occasional weakness. Not manageable struggle. Slavery. Absolute bondage. Complete ownership. The old you didn't just sin sometimes—you were *enslaved* to sin. It was your master. Your owner. Your identity.

You couldn't not sin. You were dead in trespasses (Ephesians 2:1). You were by nature a child of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). You were hostile toward God (Romans 8:7). You were a slave to the one you obeyed (Romans 6:16).

The law couldn't free you. It could only expose your slavery. Religious effort couldn't deliver you. It could only exhaust you. Self-improvement couldn't transform you. It could only produce a cleaner slave.

The only solution to slavery is death.

That's why your old self had to be crucified. Not reformed. Not educated. Not given better tools for managing sin. Crucified. Because a dead man can't be enslaved. A corpse can't serve sin. You can't force a crucified man to obey.

So God killed him.

He killed the you that was enslaved to sin. He executed the you that was under the law. He crucified the you that was hostile toward Him. He destroyed the you that was dead in trespasses.

And here's the part that should stop you in your tracks: He did it so "we would no longer be slaves to sin."

Present tense. Current reality. Not "so that we might stop being slaves someday if we try hard enough." Not "so that we could work really hard at not being slaves." But so that *we would no longer be slaves*.

The slavery is over. The master is dead. The old self that was bound to sin has been crucified.

You're free.

Not "getting free." Not "trying to be free." Free.

The question is: do you believe it?

THE DEATH CERTIFICATE

Imagine for a moment that you're standing in a courtroom. The judge looks at you and says, "I have reviewed the case. I have examined all the evidence. And I am prepared to issue my verdict."

You hold your breath.

"The defendant," the judge says, "was executed two thousand years ago at Golgotha. Death was confirmed. The body was buried. This case is closed."

You stammer, "But... but I'm right here. I'm still alive. I still struggle with sin. I still feel the pull of the flesh. I'm still—"

"That's not you," the judge interrupts. "That person died with Christ. You are a new creation. The old has passed away. The case regarding the old self is permanently closed. There is no appeal. No retrial. No reexamination. That person was crucified, and you are free to go."

This is Romans 6:6.

This is the death certificate of your old identity.

God is not waiting for you to crucify yourself. He's telling you that the crucifixion already happened. He's not commanding you to die. He's informing you that you died. He's not giving you a project to complete. He's giving you a reality to recognize.

"Knowing this," Paul says. Know it. Acknowledge it. Reckon it as true. Count on it. Build your life on it.

Your old self was crucified with Christ.

Past tense. Finished. Done.

WHY WE KEEP PERFORMING CPR

If this is true—if the old self really is dead—why do we keep acting like he's alive?

Why do we spend so much energy trying to kill what God says is already crucified? Why do we exhaust ourselves with daily self-crucifixion? Why do we treat "dying to self" as a never-ending project instead of a finished reality?

Because we don't really believe he's dead.

We look at our ongoing struggles with sin and conclude: "If the old man were really dead, I wouldn't still be dealing with this. Therefore, he must still be alive. Therefore, I need to try harder to kill him."

But that's backwards.

Your struggles with sin don't prove the old man is alive. They prove you're trying to resurrect him. Every time you return to the old identity—to performance, to shame, to self-effort, to law-keeping, to religious striving—you're dragging the corpse out of the tomb and trying to breathe life into it.

You're performing spiritual CPR on a crucified man.

And it's not working. Because you can't resurrect what God has killed. You can only exhaust yourself trying.

Here's the brutal truth: most of what we call "dying to self" is actually "resurrecting self and then trying to manage him through religious effort."

We dig up the old man. We prop him up. We dress him in Christian clothing. We teach him Bible verses. We train him to behave in church. We give him spiritual disciplines. And then we're shocked when he still reeks of death.

The old man doesn't need better training. He needs a funeral.

THE PARTS YOU'RE TRYING TO REHABILITATE

Let me ask you directly: what parts of your old self are you still trying to rehabilitate?

What aspects of the old identity are you convinced you can improve with enough effort?

Is it your people-pleasing? "If I just try harder to die to the need for approval, maybe I can finally be free from it."

Is it your performance-driven religion? "If I crucify my pride daily, eventually I'll stop needing to prove myself."

Is it your shame? "If I discipline myself to remember my unworthiness, maybe I'll stay humble."

Is it your self-reliance? "If I work really hard at trusting God instead of myself, I can finally break this pattern."

Do you see the insanity of it? You're using the old self to try to kill the old self. You're employing flesh-effort to overcome the flesh. You're resurrecting the very thing that was crucified so you can crucify it yourself.

It's like digging up a corpse so you can shoot it.

He's already dead. You're wasting bullets on a body that's been buried for two thousand years.

THE ENERGY YOU'RE WASTING

How much energy are you spending on spiritual CPR?

How many hours have you invested in trying to kill what Christ already crucified?

How many prayers have you prayed asking God to help you die to self, not realizing that you already did?

How many times have you committed—again—to take up your cross daily, treating crucifixion like a renewable gym membership instead of a one-time execution?

How much have you exhausted yourself with religious disciplines designed to manage the old man instead of living from the new?

Add it up. Really. Consider the cumulative weight of all that effort. All that striving. All that religious performance aimed at achieving a death that already happened.

That energy could have been spent living from your new identity. That effort could have been directed toward bearing fruit from your resurrection life. Those hours could have been invested in abiding in Christ instead of crucifying yourself.

But we keep performing CPR on the corpse, hoping that this time—if we just try hard enough—we can finally make him stay dead.

He is dead. He's been dead since the moment you were united with Christ. The question isn't "How do I kill him?" The question is "Will I finally believe he's dead and stop trying to resurrect him?"

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR TODAY

Here's what changes when you believe—really believe—that your old self was crucified with Christ:

You stop trying to crucify yourself. The crucifixion is finished. It happened at Calvary, not in your morning quiet time. Your job isn't to achieve your death but to acknowledge it.

You stop managing the flesh. You can't manage what's dead. You can only keep resurrecting it through unbelief and then exhausting yourself trying to control it. Freedom comes from leaving it buried, not from developing better behavior modification techniques.

You stop measuring your spirituality by how dead you feel. The old self's death isn't a feeling—it's a fact. Your emotions don't determine your identity. God's declaration does.

You start living from the reality of who you are. You're not an old creation trying to die. You're a new creation learning to live. Not from the flesh but from the Spirit. Not from self-effort but from Christ's life in you.

THE CROSS WE MISUNDERSTAND

When Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23), He wasn't telling you to crucify yourself every morning.

He was telling you to identify with His crucifixion. To embrace the death He died on your behalf. To live from the reality that the old you has been executed and the new you has been raised.

Taking up your cross daily isn't about achieving crucifixion. It's about acknowledging it. It's about saying "yes" to the death that already happened and "no" to every attempt to resurrect the old identity.

It's about refusing to drag around the dead man.

It's about leaving the corpse in the tomb where it belongs.

It's about finally believing that when Christ calls you, He doesn't bid you come and try to die every day for the rest of your life. He bids you come and recognize that you already did die—with Him—so that you might live with Him.

Your old self was crucified with Him.

Past tense. Finished. Complete.

The death has already happened.

The only question remaining is: will you believe it?

Application Questions

- 1. What parts of your "old self" are you trying to rehabilitate instead of recognizing as already crucified?**
 - Where are you still investing energy in improving what God has already declared dead?
 - What aspects of your pre-Christ identity are you convinced just need better management?
- 2. How much energy are you spending on spiritual CPR—trying to kill what Christ already crucified?**
 - When you examine your spiritual disciplines, how many are aimed at achieving death rather than living from resurrection?
 - What would it look like to redirect that energy toward abiding in Christ instead of crucifying yourself?
- 3. What evidence do you use to convince yourself the old man is still alive?**
 - Do you look at your struggles with sin and conclude the old self must still be functional?
 - How might those same struggles actually be evidence that you're trying to resurrect what should stay buried?
- 4. If you truly believed your old self was already crucified, what would you stop doing today?**
 - What religious performances are predicated on the belief that you still need to achieve your death?
 - What shame-driven behaviors are rooted in the assumption that the old you is still alive and must be controlled?
- 5. What would change in your relationship with God if you stopped seeing Him as waiting for you to die and started seeing Him as announcing that you already did?**

CHAPTER 2

The Anatomy of the Old Man

"that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." — Ephesians 4:22-24 (NASB)

Before you can understand why the old man had to die, you need to understand what he was.

Not who he was—you already know that. He was you before Christ. The you that existed outside of union with God. The you that was born into Adam's family instead of reborn into Christ's.

But *what* was he? What was his operating system? What fueled him? What drove him? What corrupted him from the inside out?

Paul tells us plainly: the old self was "being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit." Present tense in the original context—continuously, progressively, actively corrupting. Not a static condition but an ongoing deterioration. The old man wasn't just broken; he was breaking down. He wasn't just corrupted; he was *being* corrupted, continuously, by desires rooted in deception.

This is the autopsy report on your former identity. And it's not pretty.

But it's necessary. Because until you see the old man for what he actually was—not what you've romanticized him to be, not what your religious training taught you he could become with enough effort, but what God says he was—you'll keep trying to rehabilitate him instead of recognizing he's dead.

You can't grieve what you won't diagnose.

THE OLD MAN'S OPERATING SYSTEM

Every computer runs on an operating system. Windows. MacOS. Linux. The operating system determines how everything functions, how programs run, how the whole machine processes information and executes commands.

The old self had an operating system too. And it was fundamentally corrupted.

The Flesh. This was his hardware. Not his physical body—Paul isn't talking about skin and bones. He's talking about the unregenerate human nature. The self operating independently of God. The "I" that exists apart from Christ. The flesh is the old man's default mode, his factory settings, his base programming.

In Romans 7, Paul describes the flesh's capabilities with brutal honesty: "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not" (Romans 7:18). The flesh can will. It can want. It can try. But it cannot produce good. It's structurally incapable of righteousness. It's corrupted at the source code level.

The Sin Nature. This was his software—the programs running on the flesh hardware. The sin nature isn't just a tendency toward bad behavior. It's a fundamental hostility toward God. Romans 8:7 is clear: "the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so."

Not unwilling. Unable. The old man couldn't submit to God even if he wanted to. His nature was rebellion. His default was autonomy. His core programming was "I will be my own god."

Self-Reliance. This was his operating principle. The old man believed he could achieve, accomplish, earn, and prove his way to acceptance, significance, and security. He was convinced that with enough effort, enough discipline, enough moral improvement, he could make himself worthy. He could build his own righteousness. He could save himself.

This is why religious people struggle so much with grace. The old man's entire identity was built on self-sufficiency. The gospel doesn't upgrade that system—it executes it.

CORRUPTED BY DECEITFUL DESIRES

Paul says the old self was "being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit."

The Greek word for "lusts" is *epithumia*—desires, cravings, longings. Not just sexual lust, though that's included. All desires. Everything the old man wanted, craved, pursued, and treasured.

And here's the devastating reality: those desires were rooted in *deceit*.

The old man didn't just want wrong things. He was deceived about what would actually satisfy him. He craved what couldn't deliver. He pursued what promised life but produced death. His entire desire structure was built on lies.

The Lie of Independence: "I don't need God. I can manage my own life."

The Lie of Achievement: "If I accomplish enough, I'll finally feel worthy."

The Lie of Approval: "If people think well of me, I'll be secure."

The Lie of Control: "If I can just control my circumstances, I'll be safe."

The Lie of Pleasure: "If I can satisfy this craving, I'll be whole."

The Lie of Performance: "If I can be good enough, God will accept me."

Every single desire of the old man was corrupted by these foundational deceptions. He didn't just occasionally want the wrong things. His entire want-system was malfunctioning. He was like a man dying of thirst in the ocean, drinking salt water and wondering why he's getting thirstier.

This is why you can't reform the old man. His desires aren't just misdirected—they're rooted in lies. You can't fix a belief system that's fundamentally false. You can only replace it.

"The old man is not reformed but ruined," Watchman Nee said. "God does not patch up the old; He makes a new creation."

God doesn't debug your corrupted operating system. He gives you a new one.

PERFORMANCE-BASED IDENTITY

At the core of the old man's existence was a simple but devastating equation:

I DO, therefore I AM.

His identity was based entirely on performance. What he accomplished determined who he was. What he achieved proved his worth. What he produced justified his existence.

This performance-based identity showed up everywhere:

In relationships: "If I can make you happy, I matter." **In work:** "If I can succeed, I'm valuable."

In religion: "If I can be good enough, I'm righteous." **In self-image:** "If I can maintain the appearance, I'm acceptable."

The old man never rested because he was never finished proving himself. There was always one more achievement needed to secure his worth. One more person to impress. One more standard to meet. One more level to reach.

And in religious contexts, this performance-based identity became absolutely brutal.

If I pray enough, I'm spiritual. If I serve enough, I'm devoted. If I witness enough, I'm faithful. If I sacrifice enough, I'm committed. If I suffer enough, I'm sanctified.

The old man turned everything—even the gifts of grace—into measurements of his worth. He couldn't receive love because he was too busy trying to earn it. He couldn't rest in acceptance because he was constantly working to achieve it. He couldn't enjoy God because he was perpetually anxious about pleasing God.

This is exhausting. And it's meant to be.

Because the performance-based identity was designed by the law to show you that you can't perform your way to righteousness. The harder you try, the more you fail. The more you achieve, the more you realize it's never enough. The higher you climb, the farther you see you still have to go.

The old man's performance-based identity wasn't meant to succeed. It was meant to drive you to desperation so you'd finally give up and receive what you could never earn.

SHAME AS FUEL

If performance was the old man's metric, shame was his fuel.

Shame is not the same as guilt. Guilt says, "I did something wrong." Shame says, "I am something wrong." Guilt is about behavior. Shame is about identity.

And the old man ran on shame.

Shame motivated his religion: "If I don't pray enough, I'm a failure as a Christian." **Shame drove his relationships:** "If they really knew me, they'd reject me." **Shame fueled his achievement:** "If I don't succeed, I'm worthless." **Shame powered his self-improvement:** "If I can just fix this, maybe I'll be acceptable."

Think about how much of your Christian life has been powered by shame:

"I should read my Bible more." (Shame) "I should pray more." (Shame) "I should witness more." (Shame) "I should sin less." (Shame) "I should be further along than this." (Shame)

The old man's entire relationship with God was mediated through shame. He approached God not with confidence but with apology. Not with joy but with guilt. Not with expectation but with fear that he hadn't done enough, been enough, tried enough.

And here's the cruel irony: shame-fueled religion looks really spiritual. It appears humble, serious, committed. People who are motivated by shame seem more devoted than people who rest in grace. They pray more. They serve more. They sacrifice more. They try harder.

But it's all wood, hay, and stubble. Because it's all being done by a dead man trying to prove he's alive.

Shame can produce religious activity, but it cannot produce life. It can generate performance, but it cannot generate transformation. It can make you look holy, but it cannot make you whole.

And the old man was powered by it.

FEAR AS MOTIVATOR

Hand-in-hand with shame came fear.

The old man lived in constant fear:

Fear of rejection: "What if I'm not enough?" **Fear of failure:** "What if I don't measure up?"

Fear of exposure: "What if they see the real me?" **Fear of abandonment:** "What if I lose approval?" **Fear of judgment:** "What if God is disappointed in me?"

This fear drove everything. It shaped his decisions, controlled his relationships, dictated his behavior, and determined his worth.

In religious settings, this fear became spiritualized:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," we're told (Proverbs 9:10). And that's true—there's a healthy, reverent fear of God that recognizes His holiness and authority.

But the old man didn't have reverent fear. He had servile fear. Slave fear. The fear of the unprofitable servant who buried his talent because he was "afraid" (Matthew 25:25).

This is the fear that says:

- "If I don't perform well enough, God will reject me."
- "If I sin too much, I'll lose His favor."
- "If I fail, He'll abandon me."
- "If I'm honest about my struggles, He'll be disgusted with me."

The old man's relationship with God was like an abused child's relationship with an unpredictable parent. He could never relax. Never rest. Never be sure that he was safe. Because his security depended on his performance, and his performance was never consistently good enough.

So he lived in constant anxiety. Perpetual vigilance. Endless self-monitoring. Always checking, always measuring, always terrified that he'd crossed some line and lost God's approval.

"There is no fear in love," John writes, "but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love" (1 John 4:18).

The old man couldn't be perfected in love because he was enslaved to fear. And no amount of religious effort could free him because the effort itself was motivated by the fear.

THE OLD MAN'S RESUME

Let's talk about the old man's accomplishments. Because he had them. Maybe lots of them.

The old man wasn't lazy. He was driven. Motivated. Ambitious. He built things. Achieved things. Accomplished things. And in religious contexts, he could build an impressive spiritual resume.

Paul certainly did.

In Philippians 3:4-6, Paul lists his pre-Christ credentials: "If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."

Translation: "If we're comparing resumes, mine is better than yours."

- Right family? Check.
- Right heritage? Check.
- Right religious training? Check.
- Right theological convictions? Check.
- Right level of commitment? Check. (So committed he persecuted Christians!)
- Right performance? Check. (Blameless according to the law!)

Paul's old man had it all. Everything religion could offer. Everything performance could achieve. Everything self-effort could build.

And Paul calls it all *skubala*—rubbish, garbage, dung (Philippians 3:8).

Not just worthless. Not just inadequate. Actual refuse. The kind of thing you throw in the trash and never think about again.

Why?

Because it was all accomplished by the old man. In the flesh. Through self-effort. Apart from Christ.

What you accomplished without Christ might be impressive by human standards, but it's worthless for righteousness. You can build a career, earn degrees, gain recognition, accumulate wealth, achieve status—and none of it makes you righteous before God.

What you built in your own strength might look successful, but it's all wood, hay, and stubble (1 Corinthians 3:12). It burns. It doesn't last. Because anything built by the flesh cannot survive God's fire.

Your self-made righteousness might appear holy, but it's "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Your best moral efforts, your most impressive religious achievements, your most disciplined spiritual practices—if they're being done by the old man trying to earn acceptance, they're contaminated by the flesh.

Your religious credentials—like Paul's—might be extensive. You were raised in church. You went to Bible college. You served in ministry. You led small groups. You went on mission trips. You memorized Scripture. You fasted. You prayed. You tithed.

And if any of that was done by the old man trying to prove his worth, it's all trash.

Not because those activities are bad. But because the old man's motives were corrupted. He wasn't serving out of love—he was serving to earn. He wasn't worshiping from gratitude—he was worshiping to gain approval. He wasn't obeying from relationship—he was obeying to achieve righteousness.

Every item on the old man's resume was tainted by the flesh.

THE CORRUPTION UNDERNEATH

Here's what made the old man's condition so hopeless: the corruption wasn't just on the surface. It was systemic. Structural. All the way down to the foundation.

Paul says the old self was "being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit." The corruption wasn't accidental. It wasn't occasional. It was definitional. The old man was corrupted *in accordance with*—according to, in alignment with, as a result of—his deceitful desires.

His desires produced corruption. His corruption reinforced his desires. His desires deepened his corruption. His corruption intensified his desires.

It was a death spiral with no bottom.

You couldn't fix this by addressing surface behaviors. You couldn't reform it through better morality. You couldn't rehabilitate it with religious discipline. The whole system was corrupted from the inside out.

Imagine a house with a cracked foundation, black mold in the walls, asbestos in the insulation, lead in the pipes, and termites in the beams. You could paint the exterior. You could landscape the yard. You could hang new curtains. But none of that would address the structural problems. The house is condemned.

The old man was condemned. Not because of what he did, but because of what he was. Corrupted at the core. Hostile to God by nature. Unable to submit to God's law. Dead in trespasses and sins.

No renovation program could fix this. No improvement plan could address it. No religious effort could reform it.

The building had to come down.

And it did. At the cross. When your old self was crucified with Christ.

WHY REFORMATION WAS NEVER AN OPTION

This is why God didn't send Jesus to help you improve your old man. He sent Jesus to execute him.

This is why the gospel isn't a self-improvement program. It's a death and resurrection.

This is why you can't "become a better version of yourself." The old version is dead. There is no "better version" of a corpse.

"God does not patch up the old," Watchman Nee said. "He makes a new creation."

He doesn't renovate the condemned building. He demolishes it and builds new.

He doesn't debug the corrupted operating system. He replaces it entirely.

He doesn't reform the old man. He crucifies him and raises a new one.

Think about how much energy you've wasted trying to improve what God declared unreformable:

- "If I can just get my flesh under better control..."
- "If I can just discipline my old nature more effectively..."
- "If I can just train my sinful desires to behave..."
- "If I can just manage my performance-based thinking..."
- "If I can just overcome my shame with more effort..."

Stop.

You're trying to renovate a condemned building. You're attempting to reform what God has declared ruined. You're pouring energy into improving what God has already executed.

The old man couldn't be fixed. That's why he had to die.

And he did.

THE FORMER MANNER OF LIFE

Paul says all of this is "in reference to your former manner of life."

Former.

Past tense. Previous existence. Old identity. Who you used to be.

The old self's operating system—flesh, sin nature, self-reliance—that was your former manner of life.

The corruption by deceitful desires—that was your former manner of life.

The performance-based identity—that was your former manner of life.

The shame as fuel—that was your former manner of life.

The fear as motivator—that was your former manner of life.

The impressive resume built by self-effort—that was your former manner of life.

All of it is former. Past. Done. Finished.

But—and here's where we need to be brutally honest—just because it's former doesn't mean we've stopped living from it.

Just because the old man is dead doesn't mean we've stopped dragging him around.

Just because God has declared the old self crucified doesn't mean we've stopped trying to resurrect him.

We keep returning to the former manner of life. We keep operating from the old operating system. We keep functioning from performance-based identity. We keep letting shame fuel our religion. We keep allowing fear to motivate our obedience.

We keep dragging around the dead man.

And we wonder why it doesn't work. Why we're exhausted. Why we can't seem to experience the freedom Christ promised. Why the abundant life feels so... empty.

It's because we're trying to live resurrection life while powered by a dead man's corrupted operating system.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

But Paul doesn't leave us there. He doesn't just diagnose the old man. He declares the solution:

"...and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

You were created—past tense, completed action—in the likeness of God.

Not corrupted in accordance with deceitful desires, but created in righteousness and holiness.

Not performance-based, but God-likeness.

Not shame-fueled, but truth-founded.

Not fear-motivated, but love-established.

The old self was corrupted. The new self was created.

The old self was ruined. The new self is righteous.

The old self operated in deceit. The new self operates in truth.

This is what we'll explore in the chapters ahead. But before we can fully embrace the new, we have to stop trying to rehabilitate the old.

You can't put on the new self while clinging to the old.

You can't live from righteousness while dragging around corruption.

You can't experience the new creation while trying to improve the former manner of life.

THE AUTOPSY IS COMPLETE

We've examined the old man. We've seen his operating system, his corrupted desires, his performance-based identity, his shame-fuel, his fear-motivation, and his impressive-but-worthless resume.

And here's the conclusion: he was beyond repair.

Not because God couldn't fix him. But because reformation was never the plan. God doesn't want to make the old man better. He wants to make you new.

And He did.

When Christ died, the old man died with Him. When Christ was buried, the old man was buried with Him. When Christ rose, a new you rose with Him—created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

The old man is dead. His resume is trash. His operating system is obsolete. His performance-based identity is finished. His shame-fuel is empty. His fear-motivation is powerless.

He's gone.

The question is: will you finally let him stay dead?

Or will you keep dragging his corpse around, trying to breathe life into what God has declared finished?

Application Questions

- 1. Which aspect of the old man's operating system are you most tempted to rehabilitate: flesh-effort, self-reliance, or performance-based identity? Why?**

2. **What deceitful desires still hold power in your life? What lies are you believing about what will satisfy you?**
3. **How much of your Christian life is still fueled by shame? What "shoulds" are driving your spiritual practices?**
4. **What items are on your "spiritual resume" that you're still using to prove your worth to God?**
5. **If you truly believed the old man's operating system was completely corrupted and beyond repair, what would you stop trying to fix about yourself?**
6. **What would it look like to stop renovating the condemned building and start living in the new one God has already built?**

CHAPTER 3

Why the Old Man Had to Die

"Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God... But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter." — Romans 7:4-6 (NASB)

The old man didn't die because God gave up on him.

He died because death was the only solution that would actually work.

This is the part of the gospel we tend to skip over in our rush to get to resurrection. We want the victory without the execution. We want the new life without the death sentence. We want to be raised with Christ without actually being crucified with Him.

But Paul won't let us do that. He keeps forcing us back to the necessity of death. Not just Christ's death *for* us, but our death *with* Him. And he explains why in the most uncomfortable terms possible:

You were *made* to die to the law.

Not invited. Not encouraged. Not given the option. Made to die. Forced into death. Executed whether you volunteered or not.

Why? "So that you might be joined to another."

You couldn't be joined to Christ while you were still married to the law. You couldn't serve in the newness of the Spirit while you were still bound to the oldness of the letter. You couldn't bear fruit for God while you were still trying to produce righteousness for yourself.

Something had to die. And it couldn't be the law—the law is holy and good (Romans 7:12). It couldn't be God's standards—they're righteous and just. It couldn't be the requirement for holiness—God doesn't lower His standards.

So you died.

The old you. The you that was under the law. The you that was trying to achieve righteousness through performance. The you that was enslaved to the do-it-yourself salvation program.

That version of you had to be executed. Not reformed. Not rehabilitated. Not given a better strategy or stronger willpower or more effective spiritual disciplines.

Killed.

Because death was the only solution.

THE LAW: PERFECT DIAGNOSIS, POWERLESS CURE

Let's start with what the law could do—because it did something crucial.

The law diagnosed the disease with perfect accuracy. It identified the problem with surgical precision. It exposed the sin that was already there, hiding beneath the surface of religious respectability.

"I would not have come to know sin except through the Law," Paul writes in Romans 7:7. "For I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'"

The law was like an X-ray machine. It could show you the cancer. It could reveal the extent of the damage. It could make visible what was previously hidden. And it was unflinchingly honest in its diagnosis:

You're not just sick. You're dying. You're not just struggling. You're enslaved. You're not just weak. You're dead in trespasses and sins.

The law told the truth about your condition. And that was merciful, even if it didn't feel like it. Because you can't seek a cure until you admit you have a disease.

But here's what the law couldn't do: cure you.

It could diagnose. It couldn't heal. It could expose. It couldn't cleanse. It could condemn. It couldn't save. It could show you the standard. It couldn't give you the strength to meet it.

"For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh," Paul writes in Romans 8:3, "God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh."

The law was weak—not because it was flawed, but because the flesh was. The problem wasn't the law. The problem was you. Specifically, the old you. The flesh-powered, self-reliant, performance-based you.

Give a dying man a prescription, and he still dies. The prescription isn't defective. The man is terminal.

The law was the perfect prescription. But the old man was too far gone to benefit from it.

THE LAW'S CRUEL IRONY

Here's where it gets brutal: the law that was supposed to lead to life actually produced death.

"The very commandment which was to result in life," Paul says, "proved to result in death for me" (Romans 7:10).

How does that work?

The law said, "Do this and live." But the old man, corrupted by deceitful desires and powered by the flesh, couldn't do it. So the law that promised life if you obeyed it guaranteed death because you couldn't.

It's like telling a paralyzed man, "Walk, and you'll be healed." The command isn't wrong. But the man can't obey it. His inability doesn't invalidate the command—it exposes his condition.

The law commanded perfection. The old man produced performance. The law required righteousness. The old man generated religion. The law demanded holiness. The old man manufactured hypocrisy.

And with every failure, with every shortcoming, with every inability to meet the standard, the law pronounced its verdict: "Guilty. Condemned. Dead in trespasses."

This is why religious people are often the most miserable people. They have the highest standards and the least ability to meet them. They know exactly what they should be, and they're painfully aware of how far they fall short. The law keeps raising the bar, and the flesh keeps missing it.

The harder they try, the more they fail. The more they achieve, the more they realize it's not enough. The better they perform, the more clearly they see their imperfection.

The law was never meant to be a ladder you could climb to righteousness. It was meant to be a mirror showing you that you're unrighteous. And every time the old man looked in that mirror, he saw the same thing:

"Condemned, not improvable."

SELF-EFFORT LEADS TO DEATH

"For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die," Paul warns in Romans 8:13.

Not "you might die." Not "you risk dying." You *must* die.

Living according to the flesh—trying to produce righteousness through self-effort, attempting to achieve holiness through performance, working to earn God's acceptance through religious activity—is a death sentence.

It doesn't lead to life. It can't. Because the flesh is hostile to God (Romans 8:7). The flesh cannot submit to God's law. The flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8).

So when you try to live the Christian life according to the flesh—when the old man tries to obey God, serve God, please God—it's doomed from the start. Not because God is cruel, but because you're using a dead operating system to try to produce life.

Think about how much Christian teaching essentially boils down to: "Try harder."

- You're struggling with sin? Try harder to resist.
- You're not reading your Bible enough? Try harder to be disciplined.
- You're not experiencing joy? Try harder to be grateful.
- You're not loving people well? Try harder to care.
- You're not growing spiritually? Try harder to pursue God.

And what happens? You try harder. You give it everything you've got. You muster up willpower. You make commitments. You create accountability structures. You double down on spiritual disciplines.

And it works! For about three days. Maybe a week if you're really motivated.

Then you're back where you started. Maybe even worse, because now you've added failure to your list of shame-triggers.

"I tried so hard, and I still couldn't do it. What's wrong with me?"

Nothing's wrong with you. The new you, anyway. What's wrong is that you're trying to live by flesh-effort, and flesh-effort always leads to death. Not because you're not trying hard enough, but because the old man who does the trying is a corpse.

You're attempting to produce resurrection life through a crucified identity.

And it will never work.

"There is no possibility of anyone gaining a righteous standing before God by means of his own efforts, works, or merits," Brennan Manning said. Not "it's difficult." Not "it requires extraordinary discipline." No possibility. Zero. None.

Self-effort leads to death. Always. Every time. Without exception.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SELF-TRANSFORMATION

Here's the question that haunts every sincere Christian: "Why can't I change?"

You know what you should do. You want to do it. You commit to doing it. You try to do it. But you can't seem to actually do it consistently.

Paul describes this exact struggle in Romans 7:15-19:

"For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate... For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want."

This is the cry of the old man under the law, trying desperately to transform himself and discovering he can't.

He wants to change. He wills to change. He commits to change. But he cannot change.

Not because he's not trying hard enough. But because self-transformation is impossible.

You cannot change yourself at the level of your nature. You can modify your behavior. You can control your circumstances. You can manage your environment. But you cannot transform your identity by self-effort.

A dog cannot become a cat by trying really hard. A fish cannot become a bird through discipline. A slave cannot become a son by performing well.

Transformation requires something external to you. Something done *to* you, not *by* you. Something that changes what you *are*, not just what you *do*.

And that something is death and resurrection.

The old man couldn't transform himself. So God killed him and created a new man. Not an improved version of the old. A completely new creation with a completely new nature.

This is why all the self-help programs fail. All the behavior modification techniques. All the religious disciplines designed to make you better. All the accountability structures meant to keep you in line. All the spiritual practices aimed at producing transformation.

They're all operating on the assumption that the old man can be transformed if you just find the right method, the right motivation, the right accountability.

But the old man is dead. And dead men don't transform. They decompose.

THE LAW'S VERDICT: CONDEMNED

The law examined the old man and issued its verdict.

Not "needs improvement." Not "shows promise with better training." Not "could be righteous with more effort."

Condemned.

Condemned means sentenced to death. Not rehabilitation. Not probation. Not community service. Death.

The law found the old man guilty on all counts:

- Guilty of falling short of God's glory (Romans 3:23)
- Guilty of transgressing God's commands (1 John 3:4)
- Guilty of lawlessness, even when trying to obey (Matthew 7:23)
- Guilty of having a corrupt nature that cannot submit to God (Romans 8:7)

And the sentence for guilt was death. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Not "the wages of really bad sin" or "the wages of persistent sin" or "the wages of unrepentant sin." The wages of sin—any sin, all sin—is death.

The old man stood before the law, and the law declared: "Condemned, not improvable."

You cannot fix a condemned building. You can paint it. You can patch the roof. You can replace the windows. But if it's condemned, it's condemned. The structure is unsound. The foundation is compromised. The whole thing is coming down.

The law condemned the old man. Not because it was harsh, but because it was honest. The old man's foundation was corrupted. His structure was compromised. His nature was hostile to God. No amount of religious renovation could fix that.

The building had to be demolished.

GUILTY, NOT FIXABLE

The law also declared the old man "guilty, not fixable."

This is important because we tend to think guilt is something that can be managed, worked off, or compensated for through better behavior.

"Yes, I failed in the past, but if I just do really well going forward, maybe I can balance it out."

But that's not how guilt works under the law.

One transgression makes you guilty of all (James 2:10). You don't get partial credit. You don't get points for improvement. You don't get to average your performance.

You're either perfectly obedient or perfectly guilty. There's no middle ground. No curve. No "A for effort."

And once you're guilty, you're guilty. You can't unguilty yourself through future obedience. If I murder someone today, I can't erase that guilt by not murdering anyone tomorrow. My future good behavior doesn't cancel my past guilt.

The guilt stands. The condemnation remains. The sentence is pronounced.

This is why "trying to do better" never brings peace. You're attempting to erase guilt through performance, but performance can't touch guilt. Only a pardon can. Only death can. Only blood can.

The old man was guilty, and no amount of religious effort could make him innocent. He needed forgiveness, not improvement. He needed justification, not reformation. He needed to die and be raised as a new creation, not to be patched up and sent back out for another attempt.

The verdict was final: "Guilty, not fixable."

DEAD IN TRESPASSES

And then the law delivered the final diagnosis: "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

Not dying. Not sick. Not weak. Dead.

Dead people don't need medicine. They need resurrection.

Dead people don't need better diet and exercise plans. They need life from an external source.

Dead people don't need motivation. They need a miracle.

The old man wasn't struggling with a chronic illness that needed management. He was a corpse that needed burial and replacement.

This is the part we hate to admit. We'd rather be sick than dead. Because sick people can get better. Sick people can improve. Sick people can work on their health and see progress.

But dead people are beyond all that. Dead people can't help themselves. Dead people need someone else to intervene. Dead people need resurrection, and resurrection isn't something you do—it's something that's done to you.

The law looked at the old man and said: "This one's gone. Nothing to work with here. He's not in recovery—he's in the morgue."

And that diagnosis, as brutal as it was, turned out to be mercy.

Because as long as you think you're sick, you'll keep trying to heal yourself. As long as you think you're weak, you'll keep trying to get stronger. As long as you think you're improvable, you'll keep exhausting yourself with self-improvement.

But once you admit you're dead, you stop trying to resurrect yourself and you start crying out for someone else to raise you.

DEATH WAS THE ONLY SOLUTION

Now we come to why the old man had to die: because nothing else would work.

Improvement wouldn't work because the old man was corrupted from the inside out.

Education wouldn't work because the old man's problem wasn't ignorance—it was hostility toward God.

Behavior modification wouldn't work because the old man's nature produced the behavior, and you can't change nature by controlling output.

Religious discipline wouldn't work because the old man would just use discipline as another way to try to earn righteousness.

Accountability wouldn't work because external pressure can't transform internal nature.

The law wouldn't work because the law could diagnose but not cure.

Self-effort wouldn't work because self-effort leads to death, not life.

Time wouldn't work because the old man wasn't maturing—he was decomposing.

Nothing would work. Except death.

Death was the only solution that addressed the actual problem. Not the symptoms—the disease. Not the behavior—the nature. Not the performance—the identity.

The old man had to die so a new man could be born.

You had to be made to die to the law so you could be joined to another—to Christ.

You had to be released from that which bound you so you could serve in newness of the Spirit instead of oldness of the letter.

You had to be crucified with Christ so that Christ could live in you.

Death wasn't God giving up on the old man. Death was God making room for the new.

RELEASED FROM THE LAW

"But now," Paul says—and those two words change everything—"we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound."

Released. Set free. Liberated. No longer under the authority of the law's condemning power.

How? By dying to it.

You can't be prosecuted for a crime after you've died. Death releases you from all legal obligations. A corpse can't be charged, tried, or sentenced. The law has no jurisdiction over the dead.

When the old man died with Christ, he died to the law. The law's condemnation, the law's demands, the law's crushing weight of expectation—all of it lost its power over you because you died.

This is the great exchange:

The old man was bound to the law, trying to achieve righteousness through performance. The new man is joined to Christ, receiving righteousness as a gift.

The old man served in oldness of the letter—external rules, regulations, requirements. The new man serves in newness of the Spirit—internal power, grace, transformation.

The old man was condemned by the law and could never measure up. The new man is accepted in Christ and can never be condemned (Romans 8:1).

The old man was married to the law, and it was a miserable marriage. The law was a perfect husband, but the old man was an unfaithful wife. He could never please the law. Never satisfy its requirements. Never live up to its standards.

So God killed the old man and joined you to Christ instead. Not because the law was bad, but because you couldn't fulfill it. Not because God lowered His standards, but because Christ met them on your behalf.

You've been released from the law. Not released from righteousness—God's standards haven't changed. But released from the crushing burden of trying to achieve righteousness through your own performance.

SO THAT YOU MIGHT BEAR FRUIT FOR GOD

But Paul doesn't leave us at death. He tells us the purpose of it all:

"So that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God."

Death had a purpose. You didn't die just to be dead. You died so you could be joined to Christ. So you could be raised with Him. So you could bear fruit for God.

But notice: you bear fruit for God *after* being joined to Christ, not *before* or *in order to be* joined to Him.

The old man tried to bear fruit for God through law-keeping and self-effort. And what did he produce? "The deeds of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19). Immorality, strife, jealousy, anger, disputes, divisions, envy—all the toxic fruit of flesh-effort.

But the new man, joined to Christ, bears fruit *from* that union. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). This is the fruit of the Spirit, not the work of the flesh.

You can't bear fruit for God while bound to the law, trying to produce righteousness through performance. The law kills. The flesh produces death. Self-effort exhausts without transforming.

But joined to Christ? Alive in Him? Receiving His life? Then fruit happens naturally, inevitably, supernaturally—as a result of the union, not as a requirement for it.

This is why the old man had to die. Not to punish you. Not to deprive you. But to free you. To release you from the law that could only condemn. To join you to Christ who gives life.

The old man couldn't bear fruit for God no matter how hard he tried. The new man can't help but bear fruit because he's connected to the Vine.

THE NEWNESS OF THE SPIRIT

"So that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter."

This is the shift from the old man to the new. From death to life. From law to grace. From flesh to Spirit.

Oldness of the letter is the old way. The law. The external commands. The "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." The rules. The regulations. The requirements. All good, all holy, all righteous—but all powerless to transform you.

Newness of the Spirit is the new way. The internal power. The life of Christ in you. The Spirit producing what the law demanded but couldn't deliver. Not external obedience through willpower, but internal transformation through divine power.

The old man served in oldness of the letter. He tried. He strained. He committed. He resolved. He worked. He exhausted himself trying to obey external commands with internal corruption.

The new man serves in newness of the Spirit. He abides. He receives. He rests. He responds. He cooperates. He bears fruit from union with Christ, not from effort at law-keeping.

Same service. Different source.

Same obedience. Different origin.

Same righteousness. Different root.

The old man's service was death-producing because it came from death. The new man's service is life-giving because it comes from Life Himself.

WHY YOU NEEDED TO DIE

Let's bring this home with painful clarity:

You needed to die because you were condemned, not improvable.

You needed to die because you were guilty, not fixable.

You needed to die because you were dead in trespasses, not just sick.

You needed to die because the law could diagnose but not cure.

You needed to die because self-effort leads to death, not life.

You needed to die because self-transformation is impossible.

You needed to die because the old man was bound to the law and could never fulfill it.

You needed to die so you could be released from the law and joined to Christ.

You needed to die so you could be raised in newness of life and bear fruit for God.

You needed to die so you could serve in newness of the Spirit instead of oldness of the letter.

Death wasn't Plan B. It wasn't God settling for less. It wasn't failure.

Death was the only plan that would actually work.

And it did work. When Christ died, you died. When He was buried, you were buried. When He rose, you rose.

The old man is dead. The law's condemnation is satisfied. The bondage is broken. The verdict is reversed.

You've been released. Joined to Christ. Made new.

The question is: will you stop trying to resurrect what God has executed? Will you stop dragging around the dead man who was condemned, guilty, and bound to the law?

Or will you finally accept that death was the only solution—and rejoice that it's already happened?

Application Questions

1. **In what areas of your life are you still trying to achieve righteousness through law-keeping instead of receiving it through Christ?**

2. **How much of your Christian life is still fueled by the "oldness of the letter" (external rules and performance) versus the "newness of the Spirit" (internal transformation)?**
3. **What would change if you truly believed that the old man was condemned and not improvable—that death was the only solution?**
4. **Where are you still trying to fix guilt through future performance instead of receiving forgiveness through Christ's death?**
5. **If you've been released from the law's condemning power, why do you still feel bound by it? What law-based thinking are you dragging around?**
6. **What fruit are you trying to produce through self-effort that can only come from union with Christ?**
7. **How would your relationship with God change if you stopped serving in "oldness of the letter" and started serving in "newness of the Spirit"?**

CHAPTER 4

Buried with Him

"Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." — Romans 6:4 (NASB)

We're comfortable with crucifixion. At least in theory.

We sing about the cross. We wear it around our necks. We hang it on our walls. We've sanitized crucifixion enough that we can talk about "dying to self" without really confronting what that means.

But burial? That's different.

Burial is final. Burial is irreversible. Burial means you're not expecting a recovery. You don't bury people you think might get better. You don't hold funerals for patients who are still in ICU. You bury the dead. And you bury them because they're not coming back.

At least not as who they were.

Paul doesn't just say we were crucified with Christ. He says we were *buried* with Him. Through baptism. Into death.

This is the part of the gospel we'd rather skip. We want to go straight from crucifixion to resurrection, from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, from death to life. But there's a tomb in between. There's a burial. There's a Saturday when the body lies in the grave and the old identity is sealed in darkness.

And that Saturday matters.

Because you can't resurrect what you won't bury.

BAPTISM AS BURIAL, NOT JUST BATH

Most of us think of baptism primarily as cleansing. And it does symbolize that—the washing away of sins, the purification, the new start.

But Paul emphasizes something else here: baptism as burial.

"We have been buried with Him through baptism into death."

The symbolism is stark. When you go under the water, you're being placed in a liquid tomb. You're being buried. And the old you—the one who was crucified with Christ—stays down there.

In the early church, baptism often happened in rivers or large baptismal pools. The candidate would wade into the water, confess their faith, and then be completely immersed—dunked, submerged, buried under the water. And in that moment, something profoundly symbolic was happening:

The old man was being laid to rest.

Not temporarily. Not "let's see if this takes." Not "maybe we can revive him later if this new life thing doesn't work out."

Buried. Done. Finished. Gone.

When you came up out of the water, you didn't bring the old man with you. He stayed in the tomb. You emerged as a new creation, raised to walk in newness of life.

This is why baptism matters—not as a ritual that saves you, but as a vivid declaration of what has already happened to you in Christ. You died. You were buried. You were raised. Baptism is you agreeing with God's verdict on the old man: dead, buried, not coming back.

It's a funeral and a birth announcement rolled into one ceremony.

But here's what we do: we treat baptism like a bath instead of a burial. We focus on the cleansing and miss the finality. We celebrate the washing and ignore the entombment.

We come up out of the water and immediately start trying to resuscitate the old man, as if baptism was just a nice symbol of starting fresh, not an actual burial of the old identity.

Going under the water meant something. It meant the old you died and was buried. Coming up out of the water meant something. It meant a new you was raised to life.

But somehow, we've managed to bring the corpse with us out of the water. We've turned burial into a bath, and now we're confused about why we still smell like death.

THE SYMBOLISM OF GOING UNDER WATER

Let's sit with the imagery for a moment.

Water, in Scripture, often represents death and judgment. The flood in Noah's day. The Red Sea swallowing Pharaoh's army. Jonah in the depths. Jesus' own words about baptism in Mark 10:38-39: "Are you able... to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

Going under water is going under judgment. Going under death. Going under the condemnation that the old man deserved.

When you were baptized—when you went under that water—you were symbolically joining Christ in His death and burial. You were saying, "The judgment He took, I take. The death He died, I died. The burial He experienced, I experience."

And here's the crucial part: you didn't just dip your toe in. You went completely under. Full immersion. Total submersion. Every part of you under the water.

Why? Because every part of the old you had to die. Every part of the old identity had to be buried. You can't partially die. You can't mostly be buried. You can't keep one foot in the old life while stepping into the new.

The old man went completely under. And he stayed there.

This is the scandal of burial: it's supposed to be permanent. You don't bury someone with a two-way radio and a rope ladder in case they change their mind. You don't install an escape hatch in the coffin. You don't schedule regular check-ins to see if they're still dead.

You bury them. You seal the tomb. You walk away.

And that's exactly what baptism symbolizes. The old you went under the water and stayed there. Dead. Buried. Entombed. Not in a coma. Not on life support. Not resting comfortably. Dead.

The you that came up out of the water was new. Different. Raised in Christ. Alive with His life, not your own.

But we keep diving back down, trying to retrieve the old man from the tomb. We keep holding underwater séances, trying to communicate with the dead. We keep digging up what God buried, convinced that maybe some part of him is still salvageable.

He's not. That's why he's buried.

YOU CAN'T RESURRECT WHAT YOU WON'T BURY

Here's the principle that devastates all our religious striving: resurrection requires burial.

You cannot experience new life while clinging to the old. You cannot walk in resurrection power while dragging around a corpse. You cannot be raised with Christ while refusing to bury what was crucified with Him.

Jesus didn't come out of the tomb wrapped in His grave clothes and carrying His cross. He left the burial wrappings in the tomb (John 20:6-7). He left the instruments of His death behind. He emerged in resurrection life, not dragging around the evidence of His execution.

But we do the opposite. We want to be raised with Christ, but we also want to keep the old man on retainer—just in case. We want resurrection life, but we're not quite ready to commit to burial. We want to walk in newness, but we're still attached to oldness.

So we create this bizarre hybrid existence where we're theoretically new but functionally old. We claim resurrection while practicing exhumation. We talk about being raised with Christ while making regular pilgrimages to the tomb to check on the old man.

And then we wonder why we don't experience the power of resurrection life.

It's because we haven't accepted the finality of burial.

Think about the women at Jesus' tomb on Easter morning. They came with burial spices to anoint a dead body. They expected to find a corpse. Instead, they found an empty tomb and an angel with a question that should haunt every Christian:

"Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen" (Luke 24:5-6).

Why do we seek life in what's dead? Why do we keep returning to the tomb of the old identity, looking for something we can resurrect? Why are we trying to find resurrection power in what was buried with Christ?

The old man is not there. He's dead. He's buried. The tomb is empty—not because he escaped, but because *you* were raised as a new creation.

Stop looking for life in the graveyard of the old identity.

LEAVING THE OLD MAN IN THE TOMB

When Christ rose from the dead, He didn't bring His corpse with Him. He left it in the tomb. The old body—the one that had been crucified, the one that had died, the one that had been wrapped in burial cloths—stayed dead and buried.

He rose in a new body. Transformed. Glorified. Different.

Same person, new body.

That's your story too.

When you were raised with Christ, the old man stayed in the tomb. You didn't get a renovated version of your old identity. You didn't get the old man with an upgrade. You got a completely new identity—Christ's life in you.

But we keep going back to the tomb. We keep checking to see if maybe the old man is still there, maybe still has some life in him, maybe could be useful if we just gave him one more chance.

The tomb is empty. Not because the old man escaped. But because he's dead and you're new.

Mary Magdalene made this mistake at Jesus' tomb. She was looking for Jesus' body—for the dead Jesus. She was so focused on the corpse that she didn't recognize the risen Christ standing right in front of her (John 20:14-15).

We do the same thing. We're so focused on the old man, so accustomed to identifying with him, so familiar with his patterns and habits, that we don't recognize the new creation we've become in Christ.

We're looking for a dead identity in an empty tomb while resurrection life is standing right there, calling our name.

Leave the old man in the tomb. He's not coming back. And that's good news. Because what came out of the tomb wasn't a resuscitated corpse—it was a new creation.

WHY WE RESIST THE BURIAL

If burial is so clearly part of the gospel, why do we resist it so fiercely?

Why do we keep trying to dig up what God has buried? Why are we so reluctant to leave the old man in the tomb?

Four reasons, I think. And all of them reveal how much we're still attached to the dead man we claim to have left behind.

1. Familiarity with the Old Identity

The old man may have been corrupted, condemned, and enslaved to sin—but at least he was familiar. You knew how he worked. You understood his operating system. You could predict his patterns.

The new creation? That's unknown territory. That requires faith. That means trusting Christ's life in you instead of managing your own life by yourself.

And that's terrifying.

It's easier to stay with the devil you know than to trust the God you're still getting to know. It's more comfortable to operate from the old identity—shame, performance, fear—because at least you know the rules. At least you know what to expect.

The new identity requires you to believe things about yourself that seem too good to be true:

- You're righteous in Christ (not just forgiven, but actually righteous)
- You're a new creation (not just a reformed sinner, but genuinely new)
- Christ lives in you (not just helps you, but *is* your life)

That's disorienting. Unfamiliar. Hard to grasp.

So we default back to what we know: the old man's shame-based, performance-driven, fear-motivated existence. It may be miserable, but at least it's familiar.

2. Fear of Losing "Ourselves"

Here's the fear that lurks beneath the surface: "If the old man is really dead, then who am I?"

We've built our entire sense of self around the old identity. Our personality. Our strengths and weaknesses. Our successes and failures. Our wounds and our victories. Our story.

And now God says, "That old self was crucified and buried. It's gone."

So... who are we now?

This feels like loss. Like death. Like losing yourself.

And in a sense, it is. You did lose your self. Your old self. The self that was corrupted, condemned, and enslaved.

But you didn't lose yourself to become nothing. You lost yourself to gain Christ. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

You lost the old "I" and gained a new "I"—a Christ-inhabited, Spirit-empowered, righteousness-infused new creation.

But that requires letting go of the self you knew. And that feels like dying. Because it is.

So we resist the burial. We cling to the old identity, afraid that if we let go, we'll cease to exist. Not realizing that letting go is the only way to truly live.

3. Attachment to Our Accomplishments

The old man built things. Achieved things. Accomplished things. And some of those things were genuinely impressive.

Your career. Your education. Your reputation. Your ministry. Your service. Your spiritual disciplines. Your moral victories.

The old man's resume might have been "rubbish" compared to knowing Christ (Philippians 3:8), but it still represents years of effort, sacrifice, and achievement. It's hard to let that go.

It's hard to bury the identity that built all of that.

It's hard to admit that everything you accomplished in your own strength—even the religious stuff, even the ministry, even the service to God—was done by a dead man and needs to stay buried with him.

We want resurrection life, but we also want to keep the trophies from the old life. We want to be new creations, but we don't want to let go of what we achieved as old creations.

But you can't have both. The old man's accomplishments have to stay in the tomb with him. Not because they were evil, but because they were his. And he's dead.

The new you isn't building on what the old you accomplished. The new you is starting from scratch—with Christ as the foundation, not your own achievements.

4. Pride in Our Religious Resume

This is the most insidious reason we resist burial: we're proud of what we did for God.

We're proud of our Bible knowledge. Our ministry experience. Our spiritual growth. Our moral improvement. Our religious credentials.

Like Paul, we have a lot to boast about in the flesh. And we don't want to bury that. We want to bring it with us into the new life. We want credit for it. We want it to count.

But Paul says all of that—his impressive religious resume, his impeccable credentials, his zealous service—was *skubala*. Garbage. Dung. Loss.

Why? Because it was accomplished by the old man in the power of the flesh for the purpose of establishing his own righteousness.

And the old man is dead. His resume is buried with him. His accomplishments are entombed with him. His religious credentials are sealed in the grave with him.

You can't bring them with you into resurrection life because they belong to the dead man.

This is where pride meets burial. And pride doesn't want to be buried. Pride wants to be recognized, celebrated, credited, rewarded.

But "the cross is the symbol of submission," Oswald Chambers said, "and submission is the only approach to authority."

Submission to what? Submission to God's verdict on the old man. Submission to the reality that he had to die and stay buried. Submission to the truth that everything accomplished in the flesh—even for God—has to stay in the tomb.

That's humbling. Devastating, even.

But it's also liberating. Because once you bury the old man's pride, you're free to live from Christ's life instead of your own achievements.

THE FINALITY OF BURIAL

When Jesus was buried, they rolled a stone in front of the tomb (Matthew 27:60). When He rose, the stone was rolled away—not so Jesus could get out, but so people could see in and discover the tomb was empty (Matthew 28:6).

The stone wasn't there to keep Jesus in. It was there to mark the finality of burial. This is it. It's done. The body is sealed inside. The death is confirmed. The burial is complete.

And that stone should mark the finality of the old man's burial too.

The old you is sealed in the tomb. Dead. Buried. Not coming back. The stone has been rolled in front of that grave, and there's no need to roll it away because you're not expecting a resurrection of the old man.

He's dead. He stays dead. The tomb is his final resting place.

But we keep trying to roll the stone away. We keep trying to unseal the tomb. We keep trying to check on the old man, see how he's doing, maybe retrieve a few things we buried with him.

And every time we do, we're resisting the finality of what God has done.

Burial is supposed to be final. You don't bury someone planning to dig them up later. You don't seal a tomb intending to reopen it. You bury them and you leave them buried.

That's what God did with your old self. He crucified him. Buried him. Sealed the tomb. And He's not reopening it.

The question is: are you going to accept that finality? Or are you going to keep making grave-visits, trying to commune with the dead?

SO THAT WE TOO MIGHT WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE

But notice Paul doesn't end with burial. He ends with purpose:

"So that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

The burial had a purpose. It wasn't punitive. It was preparatory. You were buried with Christ so that you could be raised with Christ. You left the old man in the tomb so that you could walk in newness of life.

You can't do both. You can't walk in newness while dragging around oldness. You can't experience resurrection life while maintaining burial visits with the old identity.

Newness of life requires leaving the old life in the grave.

This is walking, not striving. Walking, not performing. Walking, not proving. Walking in newness—living from what you've become, not trying to become what you're not.

When a baby is born, you don't say, "Now try really hard to be alive!" The baby is alive. Life has been given. Now the baby just... lives. Grows. Develops. Walks in the life it has been given.

That's you. You've been raised to newness of life. You don't have to achieve it, earn it, prove it, or maintain it. You just walk in it. Live from it. Grow in it. Develop in it.

But you can't walk in newness if you're still visiting the tomb of oldness. You can't live from resurrection life if you're still trying to resurrect the dead man.

The burial was final so the resurrection could be powerful.

STOP VISITING THE GRAVE

Here's the hard word you need to hear: stop visiting the grave of the old man.

Stop making pilgrimages to the tomb of your old identity. Stop rehearsing who you used to be. Stop defining yourself by what the dead man did. Stop dragging around the corpse of the old achievements, the old shame, the old failures, the old resume.

He's dead. He's buried. He's not coming back.

And that's good news.

Because what came out of the tomb wasn't the old you with a few improvements. It was a new you with Christ's life as your life.

You don't need the old man anymore. You don't need his shame to keep you humble. You don't need his fear to keep you in line. You don't need his performance-based identity to prove your worth. You don't need his accomplishments to validate your existence.

You have Christ. And Christ is enough.

When you were buried with Him through baptism into death, you left the old man in the tomb. He stays there. You don't.

You were raised to walk in newness of life.

So walk. Don't excavate. Don't exhume. Don't resurrect.

Walk.

In newness. In life. In Christ.

And leave the dead man buried where he belongs.

Application Questions

- 1. What parts of your "old man" are you still reluctant to bury? What are you afraid of losing if you accept the finality of his death?**
- 2. How often do you "visit the grave" of your old identity—rehearsing old failures, old shame, old patterns? What would it look like to stop those visits?**
- 3. Which reason for resisting burial resonates most with you: familiarity, fear of losing yourself, attachment to accomplishments, or pride in your religious resume?**
- 4. If you truly accepted that the old man is buried and not coming back, what would you stop trying to control, manage, or improve about yourself?**
- 5. What does "walking in newness of life" look like for you today—not striving for it, but actually living from it?**
- 6. What "accomplishments" or "credentials" from your old life are you still trying to bring into your new life in Christ? Why is it hard to leave them in the tomb?**

7. **How would your daily life change if you stopped seeking life in what's dead (the old man) and started living from the life you've already been given (the new creation)?**

PART TWO: THE RESURRECTION YOU'VE ALREADY RECEIVED

CHAPTER 5

Raised with Christ — The New Life That Found You

"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." — Colossians 3:1-3 (NASB)

The verb tense matters here too.

Not "if you will be raised." Not "if you are being raised." Not "if you try really hard to be raised."

"If you have been raised."

Past tense. Completed action. Done deal.

If you're in Christ, you've already been raised with Him. This isn't a future hope you're working toward. This isn't a progressive achievement you're building toward. This isn't a reward you'll receive if you perform well enough.

You have been raised.

Already. Now. Accomplished.

This is the other side of the tomb—the side we barely believe, even though we claim it every Easter. We understand crucifixion (sort of). We've come to terms with burial (reluctantly). But resurrection? Actual, present-tense, right-now resurrection life?

That seems too good to be true.

So we hedge. We soften it. We turn it into something we're working toward instead of something we've already received. We make resurrection a future event instead of a past reality.

But Paul won't let us do that. He keeps using past tense verbs, forcing us to confront the scandalous claim of the gospel: when Christ was raised from the dead, you were raised with Him.

Not metaphorically. Not symbolically. Not aspirationally.

Actually. Really. Truly.

You've been raised with Christ. New life isn't something you're trying to earn. It's something you've already received. It found you. It happened to you. And now the only question is whether you'll believe it and live from it.

THE RESURRECTION YOU DIDN'T ACHIEVE

Just like you didn't crucify yourself and you didn't bury yourself, you also didn't raise yourself.

Resurrection is something God does *to* you, not something you do *for* God.

Think about Lazarus. He'd been dead four days. His body was already decomposing (John 11:39). He was as dead as dead gets. And then Jesus showed up and said, "Lazarus, come forth!" (John 11:43).

Lazarus didn't raise himself. He didn't decide to stop being dead. He didn't try really hard to come back to life. He didn't earn resurrection through good behavior in the tomb.

Jesus spoke, and life happened. External word. Divine power. Sovereign act.

Lazarus received resurrection. He didn't achieve it.

That's your story too.

You were dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). Spiritually dead. Completely unable to make yourself alive. You couldn't think your way to life. You couldn't behave your way to life. You couldn't discipline your way to life. You couldn't even want life—dead people don't want anything.

And then God, "being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

He made you alive. Not "helped you become alive." Not "gave you the tools to make yourself alive." Not "showed you how to achieve life."

He made you alive. While you were dead. Before you could do anything. Before you deserved anything. Before you even knew you needed anything.

"The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the ground of our justification and the guarantee of our resurrection," R.C. Sproul said. Christ's resurrection wasn't just a nice victory that shows us what we could accomplish if we try hard enough. It was the power that raised us from the dead when we couldn't raise ourselves.

You have been raised with Christ. It's done. Finished. Accomplished.

The life you're living right now—if you're in Christ—is resurrection life. Not someday life. Not heaven life. Not "when you finally get your act together" life.

Resurrection life. Now. Already. Received.

NEW LIFE ISN'T EARNED; IT'S RECEIVED

This is where everything we've been taught about the Christian life falls apart.

We've been told—implicitly if not explicitly—that new life is something we achieve through spiritual growth. That resurrection is progressive, not instant. That we're "becoming" new over time through discipline and effort.

But that's not what Scripture says.

Scripture says you *have been* raised. Past tense. You're not in the process of being raised. You're not working toward resurrection. You've already been raised.

New life isn't the reward for successful sanctification. New life is the foundation from which sanctification happens.

You don't grow into newness. You grow *from* newness.

You don't become a new creation by getting better. You become better (transformed, renewed, sanctified) because you *are* a new creation.

Think about the order: "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above."

First resurrection. Then seeking. First new life. Then new living. First identity change. Then behavior change.

You don't seek heavenly things in order to be raised with Christ. You seek heavenly things *because* you have been raised with Christ. The seeking flows from the resurrection, not toward it.

This destroys our entire self-improvement approach to Christianity.

We think: "If I seek the right things, pursue the right goals, focus on the right priorities, then maybe I'll experience resurrection life."

But God says: "You've already been raised. You already have resurrection life. Now live from it. Seek from it. Think from it. Act from it."

New life isn't the destination. It's the starting point.

It's not what you're trying to earn. It's what you've already received.

And if you don't believe that—if you're still trying to achieve resurrection life through your seeking, your pursuing, your spiritual disciplines—you're going to exhaust yourself trying to earn what you've already been given.

YOUR LIFE IS HIDDEN WITH CHRIST IN GOD

Now Paul says something that should completely redefine how you think about your identity:

"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Not "your life should be hidden" or "your life will be hidden" or "try to hide your life."

Your life *is* hidden with Christ in God.

Present tense. Current reality. Right now.

Let's unpack this because it's staggering:

Your life — Not your old life. Not the life you used to have. Your actual, current, real life. The life you're living right now.

Is hidden — Concealed. Protected. Secured. Not visible to casual observation. Not obvious on the surface. Not measurable by external metrics.

With Christ — In union with Him. Joined to Him. Bound up together with Him. Inseparable from Him.

In God — Inside the Trinity. Within the very being of God. Secured by divine power. Protected by divine love. Established by divine purpose.

Your life is hidden with Christ in God.

This is the most secure position imaginable. You're not just hidden *by* Christ. You're hidden *with* Christ. He's not guarding you from the outside. You're inside with Him, and He's inside God.

It's like a three-layer safe: Your life is in Christ. Christ is in God. And the whole thing is sealed, secured, and unbreakable.

No one can get to you without going through God. And no one can go through God without being God. Which means no one can touch your life. No one can steal it. No one can destroy it. No one can condemn it. No one can revoke it.

Your life is as secure as Christ's position in God. And Christ's position in God is absolutely, eternally, unshakably secure.

THE SECURITY OF THIS NEW POSITION

Think about what it means that your life is hidden with Christ in God:

You can't lose what's hidden in God. You might lose your job. Your reputation. Your health. Your relationships. Your comfort. But you can't lose your life because it's not in your hands. It's not dependent on your performance. It's not maintained by your effort. It's hidden with Christ in God.

Your worth isn't determined by what people see. Your life is hidden. That means the most important thing about you—your identity, your value, your standing before God—isn't visible to external observation. People see your performance. God sees your position. People see what you do. God sees who you are. And who you are is hidden with Christ in Him.

Your security doesn't fluctuate with your feelings. You might feel unworthy. You might feel like a failure. You might feel distant from God. But your feelings don't determine your position. Your life is hidden with Christ in God whether you feel like it or not. Security isn't based on subjective experience. It's based on objective reality.

Your standing isn't affected by your struggles. You're still going to sin. You're still going to fail. You're still going to struggle with the same patterns, the same temptations, the same weaknesses. But none of that changes where your life is hidden. You might stumble. You might fall. But you can't fall out of Christ because you're hidden in Him. And He's hidden in God.

This is the security the old man never had. The old man's security was performance-based. "If I do enough, achieve enough, prove enough, then maybe I'll be secure."

But the new man's security is position-based. "I'm hidden with Christ in God. Nothing can touch me there. Nothing can remove me from there. Nothing can condemn me there."

This is what Romans 8:38-39 is talking about: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor

height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Why can nothing separate you from God's love? Because your life is hidden with Christ in God. To get to you, something would have to separate Christ from God. And that's impossible.

You're as secure as the Trinity.

THE RESURRECTION REALITY: CHRIST'S LIFE IS NOW YOUR LIFE

Here's where it gets even more radical: when you were raised with Christ, you didn't just get a new life. You got *His* life.

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Not "Christ helps me live better." Not "Christ improves my life." Not "Christ supplements my life."

Christ *is* my life.

This is the mystery Paul keeps coming back to: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). Christ. In. You. Not just with you. Not just for you. In you.

His life is your life now.

Think about what that means:

When God looks at you, He doesn't see your performance trying to measure up to Christ's standard. He sees Christ. Because your life is hidden with Christ in God, and God sees His Son.

When you fail, you don't lose Christ's life. You still have it. Because it's not based on your success—it's based on His resurrection.

When you struggle, you're not struggling to maintain life. You're struggling to believe you already have it. The struggle isn't about getting life. It's about living from the life you've already received.

This is why "trying to live the Christian life" is so exhausting. You're not supposed to *try* to live Christ's life. You're supposed to *receive* Christ's life. You're not supposed to imitate Him from the outside. You're supposed to let Him live from the inside.

Christ's life is your life now. You don't have to generate it. You just have to stop resisting it.

HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOW YOURS

The old man tried to build his own righteousness. He worked. He strived. He performed. He obeyed. He sacrificed. And he never quite got there. Because "all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment" (Isaiah 64:6). Even his best was contaminated by the flesh.

But the new man doesn't build righteousness. He receives it.

"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

You are the righteousness of God. Not "becoming" righteous. Not "growing in" righteousness. You *are* the righteousness of God in Christ.

This is Christ's righteousness, not your own. His perfect obedience. His sinless life. His complete fulfillment of the law. All of it—credited to you. Imputed to you. Given to you.

And here's the scandalous part: this righteousness doesn't fluctuate based on your performance.

You don't become more righteous when you have a good day spiritually. You don't become less righteous when you fail. Your righteousness is Christ's righteousness, and His righteousness doesn't change based on your behavior.

This is what justification means: God declares you righteous based on Christ's work, not your own. And that declaration doesn't need to be repeated every time you sin. You're not justified over and over again. You were justified once, at the moment of salvation, and that justification stands.

You are as righteous as Christ. Right now. Today. In your best moments and your worst moments.

Not because you've earned it. But because you've been raised with Him, and His righteousness is now yours.

HIS ACCEPTANCE IS NOW YOUR STANDING

The old man was never quite sure if he was accepted. He had to keep performing to maintain God's approval. Every failure raised the question: "Am I still accepted? Did I just lose my standing?"

But the new man's acceptance isn't based on performance. It's based on position.

"He made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6, NKJV).

Not "He will accept us if we're good enough." Not "He accepts us as long as we keep performing."

He made us accepted. Past tense. Done. Finished.

Where? "In the Beloved." In Christ. Your acceptance is tied to His acceptance. And the Father's acceptance of the Son is absolute, eternal, unshakable.

The Father is always pleased with the Son. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:17). That never changes. The Father's delight in the Son is constant, perfect, complete.

And you're in the Son. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. Which means the Father's acceptance of Christ extends to you. The Father's delight in Christ includes you. The Father's pleasure in Christ covers you.

Your standing before God isn't based on your performance. It's based on Christ's performance. And Christ's performance was perfect.

So your standing is perfect. Not because you're perfect. But because He is, and you're in Him.

This is what it means to be raised with Christ. You didn't just get a fresh start. You got Christ's standing. His acceptance. His position. His relationship with the Father.

You're as accepted as Christ. Right now. Today. Whether you feel like it or not.

HIS VICTORY IS NOW YOUR INHERITANCE

The old man was always fighting losing battles. He'd win occasionally, but he'd lose more often. And even his victories felt fragile, temporary, like they could be reversed at any moment.

But the new man doesn't have to fight for victory. Victory has already been won.

Christ defeated sin at the cross. He conquered death at the resurrection. He disarmed the powers and authorities (Colossians 2:15). He overcame the world (John 16:33).

And you were raised with Him. Which means His victory is your victory. His triumph is your triumph. His conquest is your conquest.

You're not fighting *for* victory. You're fighting *from* victory. You're not trying to defeat what Christ already defeated. You're living from the reality that the battle's already won.

This is why Romans 8:37 says we are "more than conquerors through Him who loved us." We didn't fight the battle. We didn't earn the victory. But we get to live in it, benefit from it, walk in it.

Christ conquered. We inherit the conquest.

Think about what Christ conquered:

Sin — Its power is broken. You're no longer a slave to it (Romans 6:14). You still struggle with it, but it doesn't own you. It can't condemn you. It can't destroy you. Because Christ defeated it, and you're in Him.

Death — It's lost its sting (1 Corinthians 15:55). You're still going to die physically (unless Christ returns first), but death isn't the end. It's a doorway. Because Christ rose, and you're raised with Him.

The Devil — He's a defeated enemy. He can accuse. He can tempt. He can attack. But he can't ultimately win. Because Christ crushed his head (Genesis 3:15), and you're hidden in Christ.

The World — Its system, its values, its lies don't have the final word. Because Christ overcame the world, and you're in Christ.

The Law — Its condemnation has been satisfied. Its demands have been met. Its curse has been removed. Because Christ fulfilled it, and you died to it with Him (Romans 7:4).

All of this is yours. Not because you earned it. Not because you fought for it. But because you've been raised with Christ, and His victory is your inheritance.

You're not trying to become a conqueror. You already are one. More than a conqueror. Through Him who loved you.

LIVING FROM RESURRECTION, NOT TOWARD IT

This is the shift that changes everything: you're not living *toward* resurrection. You're living *from* it.

You're not trying to achieve new life. You're learning to live from the new life you've already received.

You're not working to earn Christ's righteousness. You're believing you already have it.

You're not performing to gain acceptance. You're resting in the acceptance that's already yours.

You're not fighting to win victory. You're walking in the victory that's already been won.

This is what Paul means when he says, "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above."

The seeking is the result of the resurrection, not the path to it.

You seek because you've been raised, not in order to be raised.

You set your mind on things above because your life is hidden there, not in order to hide your life there.

You pursue heavenly realities because you already have a heavenly identity, not in order to get one.

The old man sought things above hoping it would earn him resurrection life. The new man seeks things above because he already has resurrection life and he wants to live consistently with who he is.

Same action. Completely different motivation. Completely different power source. Completely different outcome.

The old man's seeking was exhausting because he was trying to achieve what he didn't have.

The new man's seeking is restful because he's exploring what he already possesses.

WHERE CHRIST IS, SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD

Paul tells us to keep seeking "the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."

Where is Christ? Seated. At the right hand of God.

Not standing. Not pacing. Not anxious. Not uncertain. Not fighting for His position.

Seated.

Seated means the work is finished. Seated means rest. Seated means authority. Seated means security. Seated means victory.

And that's where your life is. Hidden with Christ. Who is seated. At God's right hand.

You're not just connected to Christ. You're seated with Him. "God... raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

You're seated. Right now. In Christ. At the Father's right hand.

Not as a future hope. As a present reality.

Your position is as secure as Christ's position. Your rest is as complete as Christ's rest. Your authority is as legitimate as Christ's authority.

This is the resurrection reality: you've been raised with Christ to sit with Christ in the presence of God.

And from that seated position—from that place of rest, security, and authority—you live your daily life.

Not trying to get there. Already there. Not trying to earn it. Already given it. Not trying to maintain it. Already secured in it.

SET YOUR MIND ON THE THINGS ABOVE

So what do you do with this resurrection reality?

"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

This isn't "try really hard to think spiritual thoughts." This is "align your thinking with your reality."

You've been raised. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. You're seated with Him in the heavenlies.

So think from that reality. Live from that position. Operate from that identity.

Don't set your mind on earthly things—the old identity, the old strategies, the old performance-based, shame-fueled, fear-motivated existence. That's dead. That's buried. That's gone.

Set your mind on the things above—who you are in Christ, what you have in Christ, where you're seated in Christ.

Think from resurrection, not toward it.

This isn't positive thinking. This isn't pretending. This isn't denial.

This is believing what God says is true about you and letting that truth shape how you think, how you see yourself, how you approach life.

You are who God says you are. You have what God says you have. You're positioned where God says you're positioned.

Now think from that reality instead of from the old lies that the dead man believed.

YOU DIDN'T FIND LIFE; LIFE FOUND YOU

Let's end where we started: this new life isn't something you achieved. It's something you received.

You didn't find resurrection. Resurrection found you.

You didn't earn new life. New life was given to you.

You didn't make yourself righteous. Christ's righteousness was credited to you.

You didn't gain acceptance. You were made accepted in the Beloved.

You didn't win the victory. You inherited Christ's victory.

All of it—every bit of it—is gift. Grace. Given. Received.

Not earned. Not achieved. Not maintained by your effort.

This is the gospel: you were dead, and God made you alive. You were buried, and God raised you up. You had nothing, and God gave you everything in Christ.

"The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the ground of our justification and the guarantee of our resurrection."

His resurrection proves your justification is real. His resurrection guarantees your resurrection is coming. His resurrection secures your position now.

You have been raised with Christ. Not will be. Not might be if you try hard enough. Have been.

Past tense. Done. Finished. Accomplished.

The question isn't whether you've been raised. The question is whether you believe it. Whether you'll live from it. Whether you'll stop trying to earn what you've already been given and start walking in what you already possess.

You have been raised with Christ.

Your life is hidden with Christ in God.

You are as secure, as righteous, as accepted, as victorious as Christ Himself.

Not because of what you've done.

But because of what's been done to you.

Will you finally believe it?

Application Questions

- 1. If you truly believed you have already been raised with Christ (past tense, done deal), what would you stop trying to achieve spiritually?**
- 2. What does it mean to you personally that your life is "hidden with Christ in God"? How does that truth affect your sense of security?**
- 3. In what areas of your life are you still trying to earn acceptance instead of living from the acceptance you already have in Christ?**
- 4. How would your daily struggles change if you believed you're fighting from Christ's victory instead of for your own victory?**
- 5. Where are you setting your mind on "earthly things" (old identity, performance, shame) instead of on "things above" (your position in Christ)?**
- 6. What would change in your prayer life if you really believed you're already seated with Christ in the heavenly places?**
- 7. What does it look like practically to "live from resurrection" instead of "living toward resurrection" in your day-to-day life?**
- 8. If Christ's righteousness is yours right now (not progressively earned but already given), how does that change how you view your failures and struggles?**

CHAPTER 6

New Creation — What You Actually Are

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." — 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB)

You are not an improved version of your old self.

You're not the old you with better habits, stronger willpower, and more spiritual discipline. You're not the old you who's trying really hard to act like Jesus. You're not the old you on a self-improvement plan.

You are new.

Not "getting new." Not "becoming new." Not "working toward new."

New. Right now. Already. Completely.

This is the most radical claim of the gospel, and it's the one we believe the least: if you're in Christ, you are a new creation. The old you passed away. The new you has come. What you are now is fundamentally, essentially, categorically different from what you were.

This isn't hyperbole. This isn't spiritual poetry. This isn't aspirational language to motivate you to try harder. This is sober, shocking, literal truth: you are a new creation.

And until you believe that—really believe it, deep in your bones—you're going to keep trying to rehabilitate the old creation instead of living from the new one. You're going to keep treating yourself like a fixer-upper when God has declared you a brand-new construction.

The old things passed away. They're gone. Finished. Over. Not being renovated. Not being repaired. Not being improved.

Passed away.

And new things have come. Not "are coming." Not "will come if you work hard enough." *Have come.* Perfect tense. Completed action with ongoing results.

The newness has already arrived. You're not waiting for it. You're not earning it. You're not achieving it. You already have it.

You are what you actually are. And what you actually are is new.

NOT REFORMED — RECREATED

Let's be clear about what this newness is *not*:

Not reformed. Reformation takes something that exists and improves it. Like the Protestant Reformation—it didn't throw out the church and start over; it reformed what was there. But you weren't reformed. The old you wasn't improved. It was executed.

Not remodeled. Remodeling keeps the structure and updates the interior. New paint, new fixtures, new flooring—but same foundation, same frame, same basic structure. But you weren't remodeled. God didn't keep the old foundation and just update the cosmetics.

Not rehabilitated. Rehabilitation restores something to its former condition. Like physical therapy after an injury—you're working to get back to where you were. But you weren't rehabilitated. God didn't restore you to your original condition. He gave you a completely new condition.

You were *re-created*. Made new. From scratch. At the core. At the foundation. At the DNA level.

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature."

The Greek word is *kainē ktisis*—new creation. Not *neos* (new in time, recent) but *kainos* (new in quality, unprecedented, never existed before). This is qualitatively different newness. You're not a newer version of the old model. You're an entirely different model.

And *ktisis* means creation—something made, brought into being, formed. The same word used in Genesis 1 for God's creative work. When God created the heavens and the earth, He spoke creation into existence. He didn't reform chaos. He didn't remodel darkness. He created something that hadn't existed before.

That's what He did with you.

He didn't reform your old self. He created a new you. From nothing. Out of death. Through resurrection power.

You are a new creation—unprecedented, qualitatively different, never-existed-before you.

THE OLD THINGS PASSED AWAY

Past tense.

Not "are passing away" like it's a slow, gradual process. Not "will pass away" like it's a future hope. *Passed away*. Done. Finished. Gone.

What passed away? "The old things."

Your old identity. Your old nature. Your old standing. Your old relationship with sin. Your old slavery to the flesh. Your old condemnation under the law. Your old hostility toward God. Your old death in trespasses.

All of it—passed away.

This is more final than death. Death leaves a body behind. But when the old things pass away in Christ, they don't leave remains. They're just... gone.

Think about when Jesus calmed the storm. One moment: violent wind, crashing waves, terror. Next moment: "it became perfectly calm" (Mark 4:39). Not gradually subsiding. Not slowly dissipating. Perfectly calm. Immediately. Completely.

That's what happened to the old things. They didn't gradually fade. They passed away. Instantly. Completely. At the moment of salvation.

"But I still struggle with the same things," you protest. "I still have the same temptations, the same weaknesses, the same patterns. How can the old things have passed away?"

Because the old *things* aren't the same as old *habits*. The old things are the old *identity*, the old *nature*, the old *standing before God*. Those passed away completely.

The habits, the patterns, the learned behaviors—those take time to unlearn. Not because the old you is still alive, but because you've spent years training yourself to act from the old identity. Now you're learning to act from the new one.

It's like a prisoner who's been released from jail but keeps returning to his cell out of habit. The imprisonment is over. The chains are gone. The sentence is served. But he's so used to being a prisoner that he keeps acting like one.

The old things passed away. You're free. The question is whether you'll believe it and start acting like it.

NEW THINGS HAVE COME

But Paul doesn't stop with the negative. He follows it with the positive:

"Behold, new things have come."

Behold. Look! See! Pay attention! This is important! This is staggering! This is worth stopping and marveling at!

New things *have come*. Perfect tense in the Greek. Completed action with ongoing results.

The new things came—past tense, completed action—and they continue to be new, continue to be present, continue to be operative in your life.

You're not waiting for newness to arrive. It arrived at salvation. It's here now. It's what you are.

What new things?

New relationship with God. You were enemies; now you're children (Romans 5:10; Galatians 4:6). You were objects of wrath; now you're objects of love (Ephesians 2:3-4). You were far off; now you're brought near (Ephesians 2:13).

New standing before God. You were condemned; now you're justified (Romans 8:1). You were guilty; now you're forgiven (Colossians 2:13). You were unrighteous; now you're the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

New nature. You were enslaved to sin; now you're enslaved to righteousness (Romans 6:18). You were dead in trespasses; now you're alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:5). You were children of wrath; now you're partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

New identity. You were slaves; now you're sons and daughters (Galatians 4:7). You were strangers and aliens; now you're citizens and family (Ephesians 2:19). You were darkness; now you're light in the Lord (Ephesians 5:8).

All of this—new. All of this—already come. All of this—yours right now.

Not partially. Not progressively. Not "more new every day."

New. Completely. Instantaneously. The moment you were placed in Christ.

YOUR DNA HAS BEEN CHANGED

Let me get scientific for a moment—or at least use science as a metaphor.

Your spiritual DNA has been changed.

DNA determines what something is. A dog's DNA makes it a dog. A cat's DNA makes it a cat. You can train a dog to act like a cat, but you can't change its DNA. At the core, it's still a dog.

The old you had corrupted spiritual DNA. Sin nature. Flesh. Hostility toward God. Death. That DNA determined what you were: a child of wrath, dead in trespasses, enslaved to sin.

And no amount of training, discipline, or effort could change that DNA. You could modify behavior. You could control output. You could manage symptoms. But you couldn't change what you were at the core.

So God didn't try to fix your DNA. He gave you new DNA.

He didn't edit the corrupted code. He wrote entirely new code.

He didn't repair your sin nature. He gave you a new nature—His nature.

At the spiritual level, your DNA has been completely replaced. What you are—at the core, at the essence, at the foundational level—is different.

You're not an old creation with better behavior. You're a new creation with new DNA.

And DNA determines what something is, not just how it acts. An apple tree produces apples because it *is* an apple tree. It doesn't try to produce apples to become an apple tree. It produces apples because that's what its DNA programs it to do.

You are a new creation. Your spiritual DNA is Christ's nature, not Adam's. And that DNA determines what you are, what you produce, what fruit you bear.

You're not trying to become something you're not. You're learning to be what you already are.

WHAT MAKES YOU NEW: NEW HEART

Let's get specific about what makes you new. Because this isn't abstract theology. This is concrete, transformative reality.

First: you have a new heart.

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

The old heart was stone. Hard. Unresponsive. Dead to God. Resistant to His love. Incapable of genuine spiritual affection.

You could try to soften a stone heart, but you can't. You can chip at it. You can polish it. You can warm it. But stone stays stone.

So God didn't try to soften your old heart. He removed it. He took it out. He replaced it with a new heart.

A heart of flesh. Soft. Responsive. Alive to God. Capable of loving Him, desiring Him, delighting in Him.

This is why you can love God now. Not because you're trying really hard to manufacture affection, but because you have a new heart that's capable of love. The capacity is built in. The desire is organic. The response is natural.

The old heart couldn't love God (Romans 8:7). The new heart can't help but love God—it's designed for it.

When you struggle to love God, it's not because your heart is incapable. It's because you're operating from the old heart instead of the new one. You're acting like you still have a stone heart when God has already given you a heart of flesh.

You have a new heart. Believe it. Live from it. Stop trying to soften stone and start receiving the flesh heart that's already yours.

WHAT MAKES YOU NEW: NEW SPIRIT

Second: you have a new spirit.

This is regeneration—being born again. Born from above. Born of the Spirit.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

You were born of the flesh the first time. That birth gave you physical life, but it also gave you spiritual death—Adam's nature, sin's corruption, separation from God.

No amount of religious effort could change what you were born as. Flesh begets flesh. You can educate flesh, discipline flesh, religionize flesh—but it's still flesh. Dead to God. Hostile toward God. Incapable of pleasing God.

So God didn't try to improve your flesh. He gave you a new birth. In the Spirit. From above.

You have been born again. Not metaphorically. Not symbolically. Actually. Really. Truly.

Your spirit—the core of who you are—has been made new. Regenerated. Brought from death to life. Transferred from darkness to light. Moved from Adam's family to God's family.

This isn't just forgiveness of past sins. This is transformation of present nature. You're not just pardoned. You're regenerated. You're not just acquitted. You're reborn.

The old spirit was dead. The new spirit is alive—alive to God, alive in Christ, alive by the Spirit.

And a living spirit acts differently than a dead one. It responds. It desires. It hungers. It thirsts. It loves. It worships.

Not because you're trying to make yourself spiritual. But because you have a new spirit that is spiritual.

WHAT MAKES YOU NEW: NEW NATURE

Third: you have a new nature.

"For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

Read that again. Slowly.

You are a partaker of the divine nature. God's nature. Not just influenced by it. Not just exposed to it. Partaker of it. Participant in it. Sharer in it.

The old nature was corrupted. Decayed. Rotting from the inside out. Enslaved to lust, bound to sin, hostile to God.

But you've escaped that corruption. Not "escaping." Escaped. Past tense. Done. You're out.

And you haven't just escaped the old nature. You've received a new nature. Divine nature. God's nature.

This is staggering. You don't just have God's righteousness credited to you externally. You have God's nature imparted to you internally. You're not just declared righteous. You're made a partaker of righteousness itself—God's righteousness.

This is what makes holiness possible. Not trying to act holy with an unholy nature. But being holy from a holy nature.

The old nature produced sin naturally, organically, inevitably. It couldn't not sin. That's what corrupt nature does.

The new nature produces righteousness naturally, organically, increasingly. Not perfectly—you're still being transformed (Romans 12:2). Not instantly—you're still being renewed (2 Corinthians 4:16). But naturally, from the inside out, because that's what divine nature does.

You're not trying to manufacture holiness from corruption. You're expressing holiness from divine nature.

"Grace is not opposed to effort," Dallas Willard said. "It is opposed to earning."

You will put in effort. You will work, discipline yourself, pursue holiness. But you're not earning divine nature through that effort. You're expressing divine nature that you already have.

Effort flows from nature, not toward it.

WHAT MAKES YOU NEW: NEW IDENTITY

Fourth: you have a new identity.

"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" (Romans 8:15).

The old identity was slave. Property. Owned by sin. Bound to obey. Driven by fear. Working to avoid punishment.

The new identity is son. Daughter. Family. Adopted into God's household. Driven by love. Responding to relationship.

This isn't just a title. This isn't just legal status. This is essential identity.

You were a slave. Now you're a son/daughter. That's not just a change in position—it's a change in nature, in relationship, in standing, in inheritance, in future.

Slaves work for wages. Sons inherit. Slaves obey from fear. Sons obey from love. Slaves are uncertain of their standing. Sons are secure in their position. Slaves serve to earn approval. Sons serve from approval.

Everything changes when your identity changes from slave to son.

And here's the crucial point: you didn't earn sonship through faithful service as a slave. God adopted you while you were enslaved to sin, hostile toward Him, dead in trespasses. He made you His child not because you proved yourself worthy, but because He chose to lavish His love on you (1 John 3:1).

This is the new identity that changes everything. Not slave trying to become son. But son learning to live like one.

"The Christian life is not about finding yourself," Timothy Keller said. "It's about losing yourself in Christ and finding your true self in Him."

Your true self isn't the old you trying to become better. Your true self is the new you hidden with Christ in God. Your true identity isn't slave. It's son. Daughter. Child of God. Heir of God. Co-heir with Christ.

That's what you actually are.

WHY WE DON'T BELIEVE WE'RE NEW

If we're really new—if the old passed away and new has come—why do we struggle to believe it?

Several reasons, and all of them reveal how deeply we're still operating from the old mindset:

We measure newness by feelings. We think, "If I were really new, I'd feel different. I'd feel holy. I'd feel righteous. I'd feel like a new creation." But feelings follow faith, not the other way around. You are new because God says so, not because you feel like it.

We measure newness by performance. We think, "If I were really new, I wouldn't struggle with this sin anymore. I wouldn't fail this often. I wouldn't have these same patterns." But performance flows from believing your new identity, not from trying to prove it.

We define ourselves by our struggles. We think, "I'm a person who struggles with anger, lust, anxiety, pride—therefore I must still be the old creation." But your struggles don't define you. Your position in Christ does. You're a new creation who's still learning to live from newness.

We listen to shame instead of Scripture. Shame says, "You're not really new. Look at what you did. Look at what you thought. Look at how you failed." But Scripture says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature." Shame lies. Scripture tells truth.

We're more familiar with the old than the new. We've spent years—maybe decades—operating from the old identity. The patterns are ingrained. The habits are deep. The neural pathways are well-worn. So we default to the old even though it's dead, simply because it's familiar.

But familiarity doesn't determine reality. God's word does.

You are new. Whether you feel it or not. Whether your performance reflects it or not. Whether you believe it or not.

Your feelings, your failures, and your familiarity with the old don't change the fact of your newness.

LIVING FROM WHAT YOU ARE

Here's where the rubber meets the road: you're not trying to become a new creation. You are one. The question is whether you'll live from it.

Living from newness means:

Believing what God says about you instead of what you feel about yourself. When shame says you're still the old you, you declare, "No. The old passed away. I am new." Not as positive self-talk, but as faith in God's word.

Acting from your new nature instead of your old habits. When temptation comes, you don't fight it as if you're still enslaved to sin. You refuse it from the position of freedom—"I'm not a slave anymore. That's not who I am."

Seeing failures as contradictions to your identity, not confirmations of it. When you sin, you don't say, "See? I'm not really new. I'm still the old me." You say, "That was inconsistent with who I am. I'm new. I'm going to act like it."

Responding to God as a beloved child, not a fearful slave. When you approach God, you don't come crawling in shame, wondering if He'll accept you. You come running in confidence, knowing you're His beloved child and He delights in you.

This isn't denial. This isn't positive thinking. This isn't pretending you're something you're not.

This is believing you're something you *are*—even when it doesn't feel like it, even when your behavior hasn't caught up yet, even when you're still unlearning the old patterns.

You are a new creation. Live like it.

THE OLD AND NEW DON'T COEXIST

Here's a crucial point that many Christians get wrong: the old man and the new man don't coexist.

You don't have two natures warring within you—the old sinful nature and the new righteous nature, battling for dominance.

You have one nature: the new nature. The divine nature. Christ's nature.

But you still have the flesh—the habits, patterns, and learned behaviors from years of operating in the old nature. And you have the world—the system and values that reinforce those old patterns. And you have the devil—the enemy who whispers lies about your old identity.

So the battle isn't between two natures inside you. The battle is between the truth of who you are (new creation with divine nature) and the lies you've believed and the habits you've formed.

When Paul talks about the "flesh" in Galatians 5, he's not talking about a sin nature that's still alive in you. He's talking about the patterns of thinking and acting that are inconsistent with your new nature.

The flesh is what's left over from the old man. It's not the old man himself—he's dead. It's his wardrobe, his habits, his ways of thinking and acting. And those can be put off like old clothes (Ephesians 4:22-24).

You don't need to crucify your old nature—it's already crucified (Romans 6:6). You need to stop giving life to the flesh by acting as if the old nature is still in charge.

You are new. One nature. One identity. One creation.

Now live from it instead of from the habits of the old.

WHAT YOU ACTUALLY ARE

Let's bring this home with absolute clarity:

You are not a sinner trying to become a saint. You are a saint who sometimes sins.

You are not an old creation trying to become new. You are a new creation learning to live like one.

You are not enslaved to sin trying to earn freedom. You are free from sin learning to act like it.

You are not dead in trespasses trying to come alive. You are alive in Christ learning to walk in that life.

You are not a slave trying to become a son. You are a son learning to live from your inheritance.

This is what you actually are. Not what you're trying to become. Not what you wish you were. Not what you'll be someday if you work hard enough.

What you are. Right now. Today.

New. Created. Regenerated. Born again. Divine nature participant. Child of God.

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

The old things—your old identity, your old nature, your old standing, your old slavery—passed away. Gone. Dead. Buried.

The new things—your new heart, new spirit, new nature, new identity—have come. Present. Alive. Active.

You are new.

Not becoming new. Not trying to be new. Not hoping to be new someday.

New. Now. Completely.

And the only question remaining is: will you believe it? Will you live from it? Will you stop trying to improve the old creation that's dead and start living from the new creation that's alive?

You are what you actually are.

And what you actually are is new.

Application Questions

- 1. In what areas of your life are you still trying to "reform" the old man instead of living from the reality that you're a new creation?**
- 2. What would change in your self-talk if you really believed the old things "passed away" (past tense, done) instead of "are passing away" (ongoing process)?**
- 3. How would your approach to sin and temptation change if you truly believed you have a new nature (divine nature) instead of thinking you still have an old sinful nature that needs constant control?**
- 4. When you fail, do you see it as confirmation that you're still the old you, or as contradiction to the new you? How does that perspective shape your response?**

5. **What would it look like to live from the identity of "son/daughter" instead of "slave" in your relationship with God today?**
6. **Where are you measuring your newness by your feelings or performance instead of by God's declaration?**
7. **If you fully embraced that you are a new creation with a new heart, new spirit, new nature, and new identity, what would you stop doing? What would you start doing?**
8. **How would your prayers change if you approached God believing you're His beloved child with divine nature instead of a slave hoping to earn approval?**

CHAPTER 7

Christ in You — The Mystery Revealed

"to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" — Colossians 1:27 (NASB)

This is the mystery that was hidden for ages.

Not just that Christ died for you. That's glorious, but it's not the mystery Paul is unveiling here.

Not just that Christ rose for you. That's essential, but it's not the full revelation.

Not even that Christ is with you. That's comforting, but it's not what Paul calls "the riches of the glory of this mystery."

The mystery is this: *Christ in you*.

Not beside you. Not above you. Not helping you from heaven. Not cheering you on from the sidelines. Not giving you power to live better.

In you. Inside you. Dwelling in you. Living in you. United with you at the deepest level of your being.

This is the scandal of the gospel that we've domesticated into religion. We've reduced it to Christ FOR us (substitution) and missed Christ IN us (union). We've celebrated what He did on the cross and missed what He's doing in you right now.

Christ died for you so He could live in you. He took your sin so He could give you His life. He bore your death so He could become your life.

Not just give you life. *Be* your life.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Not Christ and you together hoping for glory. Not Christ helping you become glorious. Not Christ teaching you how to pursue glory.

Christ in you—as your only hope of glory. As the source, the power, the very substance of your transformation.

This changes everything. Because if Christ is in you, then you're not trying to live the Christian life anymore. Christ is living it. In you. Through you. As you.

And you're finally free from the exhausting burden of trying to be Christ-like through your own effort.

THE MYSTERY HIDDEN FOR AGES

Paul keeps calling this a "mystery." Not mystery like a puzzle to solve, but mystery in the biblical sense—a truth that was hidden and has now been revealed.

"The mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints" (Colossians 1:26).

Hidden for ages. Generations of God's people didn't know this. Abraham didn't know it. Moses didn't know it. David didn't know it. Isaiah caught glimpses of it, but he didn't know the fullness.

What they knew was God **WITH** them. Immanuel. God present among His people. God in the pillar of cloud and fire. God in the temple. God with them.

But God **IN** them? Living inside individual believers? Taking up permanent residence in human beings?

That was the mystery not yet revealed.

And now it's been manifested. Made known. Unveiled. The secret is out.

And what is this mystery that's worth calling "the riches of the glory"?

Christ in you.

Not just Christ for the world. Not just Christ for the Jews. Not just Christ for the righteous. Not just Christ for the morally impressive.

Christ in you. Gentiles. Sinners. The unclean. The outsiders. The least likely candidates for housing the very presence of God.

Christ in you. Actually. Literally. Really. Dwelling in you by His Spirit.

This is the mystery. And it's the only hope of glory.

NOT JUST CHRIST *FOR* YOU, BUT CHRIST *IN* YOU

Let's be clear about the distinction, because this is where most Christians get stuck.

Christ FOR you is the gospel of substitution. He died in your place. He took your punishment. He bore your sins. He satisfied God's wrath. He paid your debt. He accomplished your salvation.

This is essential. This is foundational. Without Christ dying for you, there is no gospel.

But if that's where it stops—if you only understand Christ FOR you—you're going to spend the rest of your life trying to live FOR Christ in your own strength. You're going to try to repay what He did for you. You're going to strive to be worthy of His sacrifice. You're going to exhaust yourself attempting to live up to the gift.

Christ IN you is the gospel of union. He's not just your substitute. He's your life. He's not just external to you, having done something for you. He's internal to you, living in you, being your actual source of life and power.

This is what takes the Christian life from exhausting to restful. From striving to abiding. From trying to trusting. From self-effort to Spirit-power.

Christ for you means you're forgiven. Christ in you means you're transformed.

Christ for you means your sins are paid for. Christ in you means His righteousness is expressed through you.

Christ for you means you go to heaven when you die. Christ in you means you experience heaven's power while you live.

Christ for you is the foundation. Christ in you is the building erected on that foundation.

And most Christians are living in the foundation, trying to construct the building themselves through religious effort, not realizing that Christ Himself is the building—the temple, the structure, the very life being built in them.

"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

You're not building a temple for God to visit occasionally. You ARE the temple where God permanently dwells.

Christ is in you. Not visiting. Dwelling. Residing. Living.

YOUR LIFE IS NO LONGER YOURS

This is where it gets uncomfortable. Because if Christ is in you, then your life isn't really yours anymore.

Paul says it plainly in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."

Read that slowly: "It is no longer I who live."

The old "I" is dead. Crucified. Gone. The life you used to live—the self-directed, self-powered, self-determined life—is over.

That's the death part of the gospel we covered in Part One. The old you died. The old "I" was crucified with Christ.

But Paul doesn't stop there. He continues: "but Christ lives in me."

The new "I" isn't you living better. It's Christ living in you. The new life isn't your improved self. It's Christ's actual life being lived through your actual body.

Your life is no longer yours. In the best possible way.

This is terrifying if you're still clinging to autonomy, control, self-determination. "What do you mean my life isn't mine? I have rights! I have agency! I have free will!"

But it's liberating if you understand what you've been freed from. Your life being "yours" is what got you into trouble in the first place. Your life being "yours" meant slavery to sin, bondage to the flesh, captivity to death.

Your life no longer being yours means freedom. Because the One who now lives it is perfectly free, perfectly righteous, perfectly powerful.

You haven't lost your life. You've exchanged it. His life for yours. His strength for your weakness. His righteousness for your sin. His victory for your defeat.

This is the exchange at the heart of the gospel: your death for His life.

THE EXCHANGE: YOUR DEATH FOR HIS LIFE

The gospel isn't just Christ dying instead of you. It's Christ dying as you, so that you die with Him.

And the gospel isn't just Christ rising instead of you. It's Christ rising as you, so that you rise with Him and He lives in you.

This is a complete exchange of lives:

You give Him: Your sin, your shame, your guilt, your condemnation, your death, your slavery, your old identity, your self-directed life.

He gives you: His righteousness, His acceptance, His justification, His freedom, His life, His identity, Himself.

But it's even more than an exchange of attributes or positions. It's an exchange of persons.

You die. He lives. In you. As your life.

Not alongside you. Not helping you live your life better. He IS your life.

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

Not "to live is to be like Christ." Not "to live is to serve Christ." Not "to live is to follow Christ."

To live IS Christ. Christ Himself is Paul's life.

This is what "Christ in you" means. You're not living your life with Christ's help. Christ is living His life through you.

The pressure is off. You're not responsible for generating Christ-likeness. Christ generates Christ-likeness because He's living in you.

You're not responsible for producing fruit. Christ produces fruit because He's the vine and you're the branch (John 15:5).

You're not responsible for being righteous. Christ is righteous, and He's your life.

The exchange is complete: your death for His life. Your inability for His ability. Your failure for His victory. Your corruption for His purity.

All of you for all of Him.

And He got the worse end of that deal, which is what makes it grace.

THE "I" THAT DIED VS. THE "I" THAT LIVES

Let's break down Galatians 2:20 piece by piece, because this verse contains the entire Christian life in one sentence:

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

The Crucified "I"

"I have been crucified with Christ."

There was an "I" that was crucified. Past tense. Done. This "I" was:

- The old you
- The self-directed you
- The autonomous you
- The performance-based you
- The shame-fueled you
- The flesh-powered you
- The enslaved-to-sin you

That "I" was crucified with Christ. It died. It's gone. It doesn't exist anymore.

This is the death we keep trying to achieve daily when it's already happened once-for-all. We wake up and say, "Today I need to die to self." But Paul says, "I have been crucified." Past tense. Finished.

The crucified "I" stays crucified. You don't need to re-crucify yourself. You need to reckon it done (Romans 6:11).

The Resurrected "I" That Is Christ

"And it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."

But there's still an "I" living. Paul is still alive. He's still a person with a name and a history and a personality and preferences.

So what happened?

The old "I"—the self-directed Paul who was enslaving himself to the law, persecuting the church, building his own righteousness—that "I" died.

The new "I"—the Christ-indwelt Paul who lives from grace, serves the church, rests in Christ's righteousness—that "I" is alive.

But notice: the new "I" isn't living. Christ is living. In the new "I."

This is the mystery. You're still you—with your personality, your history, your unique expression. But the life animating you isn't yours anymore. It's Christ's.

You're still Paul. But it's not Paul living. It's Christ living in and as and through Paul.

You're still you. But it's not you living anymore. It's Christ living in and as and through you.

Same person. Different life source.

This is union with Christ. Not fusion (you don't disappear into Christ and lose your identity). Not separation (Christ and you as two separate entities cooperating). But union—you and Christ joined so completely that His life becomes your life while you remain distinctly you.

It's like a branch and a vine. The branch is still a branch—distinct, identifiable, unique. But the life flowing through it is the vine's life, not its own. The branch doesn't generate life. It receives and expresses the vine's life.

That's you. You're still you. But the life you're expressing is Christ's life, not your own.

Living "In the Flesh" by Faith

"And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God."

This is where it gets practical. You're still living "in the flesh"—in your physical body, in this fallen world, in time and space.

You haven't been beamed up to heaven. You're still here. With bills to pay and relationships to navigate and temptations to face and struggles to endure.

But the *way* you live in the flesh has changed. You're not living by self-effort anymore. You're living by faith.

Faith in what? "Faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

You're trusting that Christ, who loved you enough to die for you, now lives in you and is living His life through you.

You're not trying to live for Him. You're trusting Him to live in you.

You're not striving to be like Him. You're abiding in Him and letting Him express Himself through you.

This is faith: believing that Christ in you is sufficient. That His life in you is enough. That you don't need to add your self-effort to His indwelling presence.

Living by faith means you stop trying to produce what only Christ can produce and you start receiving what Christ is already producing in you.

CHRIST IN YOU: THE HOPE OF GLORY

Back to Colossians 1:27: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Why is Christ in you your hope of glory? Why not Christ for you? Why not Christ with you? Why specifically Christ *in* you?

Because glory isn't something you achieve externally. Glory is something that radiates from within.

Moses' face glowed after being in God's presence (Exodus 34:29). Not because he worked really hard at being glorious. Because he'd been exposed to glory and it rubbed off on him. Literally.

But that glory faded (2 Corinthians 3:7). It was external. Temporary. Borrowed.

But you? You don't just visit God's glory. You house God's glory. Christ—the very glory of God (Hebrews 1:3)—dwells in you.

And that glory doesn't fade. It increases. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

From glory to glory. Increasing. Progressing. Growing. Not from no-glory to some-glory, but from glory to more-glory.

Why? Because Christ is in you. And Christ is the glory of God. And the more you behold Him (not in external rules but in internal relationship), the more you're transformed into His image.

This isn't you trying to become glorious. This is Christ's glory radiating from within you, transforming you from the inside out.

He is your hope of glory. Not your work. Not your effort. Not your performance. Him. In you. Living. Transforming. Radiating.

WORKING OUT WHAT'S ALREADY WORKING IN

Now let's address the passage that causes so much confusion and turns people back to performance-based religion:

"So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13).

"Work out your salvation"—that sounds like effort, right? That sounds like you're supposed to be striving, producing, achieving.

And Christians have turned this verse into a license to drag the dead man around again. "See? You have to work! You have to try! You have to produce your salvation!"

But that completely misses what Paul is saying. Look at the whole passage, not just verse 12.

First: "Work OUT your salvation." Not work FOR your salvation. Not work TO GET your salvation. Work it OUT. Express it. Manifest it. Bring to the surface what's already inside.

You're not working to achieve salvation. You're working out the salvation you already have.

It's like working out at the gym. You're not working out to get muscles that don't exist. You're working out to develop muscles that are already there. You're not creating muscle tissue. You're expressing, strengthening, defining what already exists.

That's what you're doing with salvation. Christ in you IS your salvation. He's fully present. Completely resident. Entirely there. You're not trying to get more of Him. You already have all of Him.

But you're working out—expressing, manifesting, bringing into daily experience—what's already fully present in you: Christ.

Second: "With fear and trembling." This isn't servile fear. This isn't "I'm terrified God will reject me if I don't work hard enough."

This is reverent awe at what God has done. This is trembling wonder that Christ Himself lives in you. This is holy astonishment that God is at work in you.

It's the fear and trembling of Moses at the burning bush: "Take off your sandals, for you're on holy ground." You're not standing on holy ground—you ARE holy ground. Christ dwells in you. Approach that reality with reverent awe.

Third: "For it is GOD who is at work in you." This is the key. You work out because God is working in.

You're not generating the work. God is. You're not producing the transformation. God is. You're not creating the will or the doing. God is.

"Both to will and to work"—God is producing the desire (to will) and the power (to work) for His good pleasure.

The energy isn't yours. The source isn't you. The work is God's.

You're responding to what He's doing, not initiating what you hope He'll bless.

This is the complete opposite of dead-man-dragging religion. Religion says, "Work hard enough and maybe God will be pleased." The gospel says, "God is at work in you for His good pleasure—express what He's doing."

CHRIST IN FULLNESS, NOT IN PROGRESSION

Here's the crucial distinction: Christ didn't partially enter you at salvation with plans to progressively enter more of you as you grow.

You don't have 30% of Christ now and earn another 10% through Bible study and another 15% through prayer and another 20% through service and hope to get to 100% eventually.

You have all of Christ. 100%. Fully. Completely. From the moment of salvation.

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete" (Colossians 2:9-10).

In Christ, you have been made complete. Not "being made complete." Not "will be made complete if you try hard." Made complete. Past tense. Done.

You're not trying to get more of Christ. You're learning to express the Christ you fully have.

You're not trying to achieve fullness. You're learning to live from the fullness you've already received.

The Christian life isn't about getting Christ to fill more and more of you. It's about believing He already fully dwells in you and living from that fullness.

This is why working out your salvation isn't working FOR salvation. It's expressing the salvation—the full, complete, dwelling presence of Christ—that's already fully in you.

You're not filling up an empty tank. You're opening the valve on a full tank and letting the power flow.

NOT TRYING TO LIVE FOR HIM, BUT TRUSTING HIM TO LIVE IN YOU

Let's bring this to ground level. What does it actually look like to live from "Christ in you" instead of trying to live for Christ?

When you face temptation:

- The old way: "I need to resist this in my own strength. I need to try harder. I need to be more disciplined."

- The Christ-in-you way: "Christ in me is not tempted by this. I'm going to trust His life in me to say no to what contradicts His nature."

When you fail:

- The old way: "I'm such a failure. I can't believe I did that again. I need to try harder next time."
- The Christ-in-you way: "That was inconsistent with who I am—a person in whom Christ dwells. I'm not going to agree with that behavior. I'm going to return to living from Christ's life in me."

When you serve:

- The old way: "I need to do more for God. I need to prove my devotion. I need to earn His approval through my service."
- The Christ-in-you way: "Christ's love in me overflows to others. I'm simply expressing what He's doing in me."

When you pray:

- The old way: "I need to pray more. I need to try harder to connect with God. I need to be more disciplined about my quiet time."
- The Christ-in-you way: "Christ in me wants to communicate with the Father. I'm going to cooperate with what He's already doing."

When you're anxious:

- The old way: "I need to stop being anxious. I need to control my thoughts better. I need to be more faithful."
- The Christ-in-you way: "Christ in me is peace. I'm going to trust that His peace is in me and let it rise to the surface instead of my anxiety."

Do you see the difference? One is you trying. The other is you trusting. One is self-effort. The other is Christ-expression.

"The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good," C.S. Lewis said, "but that God will make us good because He loves us."

God's not waiting for you to be good so He'll love you. He loves you, and because He loves you, He's dwelling in you and making you good from the inside out.

Not by you trying to be good. But by Christ being Christ in you.

THE RICHES OF THE GLORY

Paul calls this "the riches of the glory of this mystery."

Riches. Plural. Abundant. Overflowing. More than you can measure or exhaust.

What are the riches of Christ in you?

- **Unlimited resources.** You're not limited to your own strength, wisdom, love, patience. You have access to Christ's inexhaustible supply.
- **Unshakable security.** Christ in you means you're as secure as Christ is. No one can pluck you from His hand because you're not just in His hand—He's in you.
- **Unstoppable transformation.** You're being transformed from the inside out by the One who dwells within. It's not dependent on your effort. It's inevitable because He's in you.
- **Unearned righteousness.** You don't have to produce righteousness. Christ is righteous, and He's in you. His righteousness is expressed through you as you trust Him.
- **Unfading glory.** The glory isn't external and temporary like Moses'. It's internal and increasing because Christ—who is the glory of God—dwells in you.

These riches are yours. Not because you've earned them. Not because you're worthy of them. But because Christ is in you.

And Christ brings everything He is into union with you.

His life becomes your life. His nature becomes your nature. His power becomes your power. His victory becomes your victory. His righteousness becomes your righteousness.

Not partially. Not progressively. Fully. Completely. From the moment He took up residence in you.

This is the mystery that was hidden for ages and is now revealed: Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Not Christ and you hoping for glory together. Christ in you as your only hope of ever experiencing glory.

STOP TRYING. START TRUSTING.

Here's the bottom line: if Christ is in you, you can stop trying to live the Christian life in your own strength.

Stop trying to be like Jesus. Let Jesus be Jesus in you.

Stop trying to produce fruit. Abide in the Vine and let Him produce it.

Stop trying to generate love, joy, peace. Trust that Christ in you IS love, joy, peace, and let Him express it.

Stop trying to earn God's approval. Christ in you is fully approved, and you're in Him.

Stop trying to become righteous. Christ in you IS righteousness. Live from it.

Stop trying to overcome. Christ in you has already overcome. Walk in His victory.

The mystery is revealed. Christ is in you. Fully. Completely. Permanently.

Your life is no longer yours. And that's the best news you could ever receive.

Because the One whose life it now is—Christ—is infinitely better at living it than you ever were.

Work out your salvation with reverent awe at this staggering reality: God Himself dwells in you, working in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

You're not working for salvation. You're working out the salvation that's already fully present in you.

You're not trying to get Christ to enter you more fully. You're trusting that Christ is fully in you and letting His fullness express itself through your life.

This is the riches of the glory of the mystery: Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Stop dragging around the dead man who tried to live for God in his own strength.

Start living from the reality that Christ lives in you, and His life is now yours.

Application Questions

- 1. How does understanding that Christ lives IN you (not just FOR you) change your approach to daily Christian living?**
- 2. In Galatians 2:20, which "I" are you still trying to resurrect—the crucified "I" or are you living from the "I" that is Christ in you?**

3. **What would change in your life if you really believed you have 100% of Christ right now, not 30% that you're trying to increase to 100% through effort?**
4. **When you think about "working out your salvation," are you working FOR it (trying to earn or achieve) or working OUT what's already fully IN (expressing Christ who dwells in you)?**
5. **Where are you still "trying to live for Christ" instead of "trusting Christ to live in you"? What does the shift from trying to trusting look like in that area?**
6. **What would it look like today to approach temptation, service, prayer, and anxiety from "Christ in you" instead of "you trying for Christ"?**
7. **If Christ in you is "the riches of the glory," which of those riches (unlimited resources, unshakable security, unstoppable transformation, unearned righteousness, unfading glory) do you most need to believe and receive today?**
8. **How does "fear and trembling" change from servile terror to reverent awe when you understand that God is at work IN you, not waiting for you to work FOR Him?**

CHAPTER 8

From Slaves to Sons

"Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." — Galatians 4:6-7 (NASB)

You are not a slave anymore.

Read that again. Slowly. Let it sink in.

You. Are. Not. A. Slave. Anymore.

You're a son. A daughter. A child of God. An heir. Family.

Not a servant hoping to be promoted to family status someday through faithful service. Not a slave working to earn the master's approval. Not an employee trying to get on the boss's good side.

A son. A daughter. Already. Fully. Permanently.

This is your identity. Not your aspiration. Not your goal. Not what you're working toward.

What you are. Right now. Today.

But if that's true—and it is—why do so many of us still live like slaves?

Why do we approach God like fearful servants instead of beloved children? Why do we serve Him out of obligation instead of devotion? Why do we try to earn what's already been given? Why do we perform for approval we already have?

Because somewhere deep down, we don't believe we're really sons and daughters. We believe we're still slaves—maybe slaves who've been promised eventual adoption if we prove ourselves worthy, but slaves nonetheless.

And so we drag around the dead man's slave identity, trying to work our way into sonship, exhausting ourselves trying to earn what Christ has already secured for us.

It's time to stop. Time to believe what God says about you. Time to lay down the slave mentality and live from your sonship.

You are no longer a slave. You are a son. You are a daughter. And everything changes from here.

THE OLD MAN'S IDENTITY: SLAVE

The old man had one identity: slave.

Not metaphorically. Actually. Really. Completely.

"For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness" (Romans 6:20).

When you were slaves. Past tense. That was your identity. Your defining characteristic. Your essential nature.

You were owned by sin. Bound to it. Controlled by it. Unable to escape it. Sin was your master, and you were its property.

A slave has no rights. No freedom. No choice. No inheritance. A slave does what the master commands. A slave lives under constant threat of punishment. A slave works to avoid discipline, not to receive reward.

And the old man was a slave to sin. Completely. Thoroughly. Hopelessly.

But it gets worse. The old man wasn't just a slave to sin. He was also a slave to the law.

Paul explains this in Galatians 4:1-3: "Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world."

The law was a guardian, a manager, keeping us in bondage. Not because the law was evil, but because we were enslaved. We were under the law like slaves under an overseer.

The law said, "Do this and live." But we couldn't do it. The law said, "Obey and be blessed." But we couldn't obey. The law said, "Be perfect." But we were enslaved to imperfection.

So the law became another master—exposing our slavery to sin while being unable to free us from it.

The old man was doubly enslaved: enslaved to sin (the master he served) and enslaved under the law (the system that condemned him).

And from this position of double slavery, the old man tried to earn righteousness. Tried to prove himself worthy. Tried to work his way to acceptance.

But slaves can't earn what only sons inherit.

THE SLAVE MENTALITY

Even though the old man is dead—even though you've been crucified with Christ, buried with Him, raised with Him, made a new creation, indwelt by Christ—it's still possible to live from the old slave mentality.

You can be a son and still think like a slave. You can have an inheritance and still work for wages. You can be in the family and still act like hired help.

This is what most Christians do. We know theologically that we're God's children. We sing about being adopted into His family. We quote the verses about sonship.

But functionally, we still operate as slaves.

The slave mentality says:

- "I have to earn God's love through performance."
- "If I obey, God will accept me. If I fail, He'll reject me."
- "My standing with God depends on my spiritual productivity."
- "I'm only valuable if I'm useful."
- "God is waiting for me to mess up so He can punish me."
- "I need to work harder to deserve His blessings."
- "My relationship with God is based on what I do for Him."

This produces:

- Constant anxiety about your standing with God
- Fear of failure
- Drivenness in service
- Inability to rest
- Performing for approval you think you haven't earned yet
- Shame when you fall short
- Pride when you succeed
- The stench of the dead man

The slave mentality is exhausting because you're constantly working to maintain a position you think you might lose. You're perpetually trying to earn what you're terrified of losing. You're forever proving yourself to a Master you're not sure really loves you.

And here's the tragedy: all of that exhausting effort is based on a lie.

You're not a slave. You're a son. You're a daughter. The Master you're trying to impress is actually a Father who's already adopted you. The approval you're working to earn has already been freely given.

The slave died with Christ. You're living from a dead man's mentality when you operate as a slave.

THE NEW MAN'S IDENTITY: SON/DAUGHTER

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).

God didn't send His Son to help you be a better slave. He sent His Son to redeem you from slavery and adopt you as a child.

Adoption. Not probationary status. Not trial period. Not conditional acceptance. Adoption.

In Roman culture (the context Paul's writing from), adoption was permanent and irrevocable. An adopted son had the same legal standing as a biological son. Same rights. Same inheritance. Same family name. Same relationship with the father.

And unlike biological children who could potentially be disowned (though rarely), adopted children couldn't be. Adoption was a final, legal, permanent act that created an unbreakable family bond.

That's your position. You've been adopted. Legally. Permanently. Irrevocably.

"Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"

Notice the order: "Because you ARE sons..." Not "if you become sons" or "when you earn sonship" or "after you prove yourself worthy of sonship."

You ARE sons. You ARE daughters. Present tense. Current reality. Already accomplished.

Why? Because God sent His Son to redeem you from slavery and adopt you into His family. And that adoption is complete.

And how do you know it's real? Because God sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts. The same Spirit that dwelt in Jesus—the Son—now dwells in you. And that Spirit doesn't cry out "Master! Owner! Taskmaster!"

He cries out "Abba! Father!"

ABBA, FATHER

Abba.

This is the word Jesus used in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You" (Mark 14:36).

It's an Aramaic word—intimate, affectionate, personal. The closest English equivalent is "Papa" or "Daddy." Not disrespectful, but deeply intimate. The word a child would use with a father they trust completely, love deeply, and feel utterly safe with.

A slave would never address the master as "Abba." That would be presumptuous, inappropriate, dangerous.

But a son? A beloved child? That's the natural, appropriate, beautiful way to address a father.

And the Spirit in you—the Spirit of God's Son—is crying out "Abba! Father!"

Not "Master." Not "Sir." Not "My Lord" (though He is Lord). The Spirit is crying out with the intimate language of family, relationship, love.

This is your identity. This is your position. This is your relationship with God.

You're not an employee. You're family. You're not a servant trying to please a demanding boss. You're a child resting in a father's love.

When you pray, you don't approach as a slave hoping the master will give you an audience. You come running to Abba, knowing He delights in you, loves you, welcomes you.

When you fail, you don't cower in fear waiting for punishment. You run to Father, knowing He receives you, forgives you, restores you.

When you need something, you don't try to earn the right to ask. You ask boldly, as a child asks a loving father, knowing He gives good gifts to His children.

This changes everything.

THEREFORE YOU ARE NO LONGER A SLAVE, BUT A SON

"Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God."

No longer a slave. Not "less of a slave." Not "partially freed." Not "working toward freedom." No longer a slave.

The slavery is over. Completely. Finally. Permanently.

You don't have to earn your freedom—Christ purchased it. You don't have to work your way out of slavery—Christ brought you out. You don't have to prove yourself worthy of adoption—Christ's worthiness is yours.

You are no longer a slave.

But a son. Not "becoming a son." Not "trying to be a son." Not "hoping to be promoted to sonship someday." You ARE a son. You ARE a daughter.

This is identity, not aspiration. Position, not progression. Reality, not goal.

And if you're a son, if you're a daughter, then you're an heir. You inherit what sons inherit. You receive what children receive. You possess what family possesses.

Not because you've earned it. Not because you've worked for it. Not because you've proven yourself worthy of it.

But because you're family. And family inherits.

INHERITANCE VS. WAGES

This is one of the most crucial distinctions between slavery and sonship:

Slaves earn wages. They work for payment. They perform for compensation. They labor to receive what they're owed based on their productivity.

Sons receive inheritance. They don't earn it. They don't work for it. They don't deserve it. They receive it because they're family.

The old man approached everything as wages to be earned. "If I obey, God will bless me. If I serve, God will reward me. If I perform well enough, God will accept me."

But that's slave-thinking. That's approaching God as a taskmaster who pays based on productivity.

The new man approaches everything as inheritance to be received. "Because I'm God's child, I have access to everything He has. Not because I've earned it, but because I'm family."

Think about the difference:

The slave says: "I'll read my Bible so God will bless me." (Wages) **The son says:** "I'll read my Bible because God has given me His Word as my inheritance." (Inheritance)

The slave says: "I'll pray so God will answer me." (Wages) **The son says:** "I'll pray because I have access to my Father anytime I want." (Inheritance)

The slave says: "I'll serve so God will be pleased with me." (Wages) **The son says:** "I'll serve because my Father has blessed me abundantly and I want to express His love." (Inheritance)

The slave says: "I need to obey to earn God's favor." (Wages) **The son says:** "I get to obey because I already have God's favor." (Inheritance)

Do you see the shift? Same actions. Completely different motivation. Completely different source. Completely different result.

The slave is exhausted, anxious, always wondering if they've done enough. The son is restful, secure, knowing they're loved regardless of performance.

The slave's obedience is grudging obligation. The son's obedience is joyful response.

The slave serves to get. The son serves from gratitude for what they already have.

You're not a slave earning wages. You're a son receiving inheritance.

RELATIONSHIP VS. PERFORMANCE

This distinction flows from inheritance vs. wages:

The slave's relationship with the master is based on performance. "If I perform well, the master is pleased. If I perform poorly, the master is angry. My standing with the master depends entirely on my productivity."

The son's relationship with the father is based on family. "My father loves me because I'm his child. My performance doesn't determine his love—his love determines my identity. I'm secure in the relationship regardless of my productivity."

The slave mentality makes everything about performance:

- "God loves me when I'm good."
- "God is pleased with me when I obey."
- "God is disappointed in me when I fail."
- "My relationship with God is strong when I'm spiritually productive."

But that's not how fathers and children work. My children don't earn my love by performing well. I don't stop loving them when they fail. Their standing in my family isn't based on their productivity. They're my children—period. That relationship is secure, permanent, unshakable.

And their obedience? It flows from the relationship, not toward it. When they obey, they're not earning my love or securing their place in the family. They're responding to the love that's already secure.

That's how it works with your heavenly Father.

Your relationship with Him isn't based on your performance. It's based on Christ's performance. And Christ performed perfectly. Which means your standing is perfect, your acceptance is complete, your relationship is secure.

You can't improve it by performing well. You can't damage it by performing poorly. It's based on Christ, not on you.

This frees you to obey from love instead of fear. To serve from gratitude instead of obligation. To pursue holiness from security instead of anxiety.

Performance flows from relationship. It doesn't create relationship.

THE SHIFT FROM SLAVERY TO SONSHIP

Let's make this intensely practical. What actually changes when you move from slave mentality to son mentality?

From Earning to Receiving

Slave mentality: "I have to earn everything from God through my performance."

Son mentality: "Everything I need has already been given to me in Christ. Now I receive it by faith."

The slave is always working to get. The son is learning to receive what's already his.

The slave reads the Bible to earn God's favor. The son reads the Bible to receive from Father's hand.

The slave prays to get God to do something. The son prays to commune with Father and receive what He's already giving.

The shift isn't from effort to passivity. It's from earning to receiving. From striving to resting. From anxious performing to confident trusting.

From Fear to Love

Slave mentality: "I'm afraid of God. Afraid of His anger. Afraid of punishment. Afraid of rejection. My obedience is motivated by fear of consequences."

Son mentality: "I love God. I'm secure in His love for me. My obedience is motivated by love, gratitude, and desire to please my Father who delights in me."

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love" (1 John 4:18).

The slave is motivated by fear of punishment. The son is motivated by love.

The slave obeys to avoid consequences. The son obeys because he loves his Father and wants to honor Him.

The slave approaches God with dread. The son approaches God with confidence.

Fear produces compliance. Love produces devotion.

From Obligation to Devotion

Slave mentality: "I have to serve God. I'm obligated. If I don't, there will be consequences. My service is duty."

Son mentality: "I get to serve God. It's a privilege. My service is a response to His overwhelming love and grace."

The slave serves from obligation. "I should pray. I ought to read my Bible. I'm supposed to serve in the church. I have to witness."

Every spiritual discipline becomes a burden. Every act of obedience feels like duty. Every commandment feels like a weight.

But the son serves from devotion. "I get to talk to my Father in prayer. I get to receive from His Word. I get to express His love through service. I get to tell others about Him."

Same actions. Completely different heart.

Obligation says, "I must." Devotion says, "I want to."

Obligation drains you. Devotion energizes you.

Obligation is slavery. Devotion is freedom.

From Trying to Trusting

Slave mentality: "It's all up to me. I have to try harder. Work harder. Be more disciplined. Produce more. If I don't, I'll fail."

Son mentality: "My Father is at work in me. I trust His work. I cooperate with what He's doing instead of trying to produce in my own strength."

The slave is constantly trying—trying to be good enough, trying to do enough, trying to earn approval, trying to maintain standing.

The son is trusting—trusting Father's love, trusting Christ's work, trusting the Spirit's power, trusting that he's already accepted and is being transformed from the inside out.

The slave exhausts himself trying. The son rests in trusting.

This doesn't mean passivity. Sons work hard, pursue holiness, exercise discipline. But they do it from rest, not from striving. From trust in what God is doing, not from trying to make something happen on their own.

"Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion," Billy Graham said. "It is like a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ."

Yes. You grow. You develop. You mature. You're transformed. But here's the crucial point: you grow FROM sonship, not FOR sonship.

You're not growing to become a son. You're growing because you ARE a son.

The growth is the process of learning to live from your identity, not the process of earning your identity.

You're already family. Now you're learning to live like it.

AND IF A SON, THEN AN HEIR THROUGH GOD

"And if a son, then an heir through God."

Heir. Not employee. Not servant. Not even friend (though you are a friend—John 15:15).

Heir.

Everything God has is yours. Not someday. Not if you earn it. Not if you prove worthy. Now. Already. As an inheritance.

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

Freely. Not grudgingly. Not conditionally. Freely. As a gift. As an inheritance.

All things. Not just salvation. Not just forgiveness. All things. Everything you need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3).

You're an heir. And the inheritance is Christ Himself—"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete" (Colossians 2:9-10).

You don't have part of Christ now and hope to get more if you're faithful. You have all of Christ. Completely. Fully. And in Him, you have everything.

This is your inheritance as a son, as a daughter. Not wages you've earned. Not payment for services rendered. Inheritance you've received because you're family.

The slave can never rest because he's always working to earn the next wage. The son rests in the inheritance that's already his and simply learns to live from it.

THE PRODIGAL SONS

Jesus told a story about two sons and a father (Luke 15:11-32). And both sons had slave mentalities.

The younger son took his inheritance, wasted it, ended up in a pigpen, and finally came to his senses. But notice what he planned to say to his father: "I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men" (Luke 15:19).

Slave mentality. "I've failed. I've sinned. I'm not worthy to be a son anymore. Maybe Father will hire me as a servant."

He's willing to work as a slave if he can just get close to the father's house again.

But the father won't have it. Before the son can even finish his rehearsed speech, the father interrupts: "Bring the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet... for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again" (Luke 15:22, 24).

Robe, ring, sandals—symbols of sonship, authority, family status. Not servant clothes. Not slave wages. Sonship.

"This son of mine." Not "this former son" or "this servant" or "this hired hand." This son.

The father refuses to let him be a slave. He's a son. And sons get the inheritance, the celebration, the father's embrace.

But there's another son in the story. The older brother. The one who stayed home, worked hard, obeyed perfectly.

And he's furious when the younger son gets the party. Listen to his complaint: "Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends" (Luke 15:29).

Slave mentality. "I've been serving you. I've obeyed perfectly. Where's my payment? Where are my wages? I've earned something."

He's in the house. He's doing the work. He's technically part of the family. But he's thinking like a slave.

And the father's response is heartbreak: "Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours" (Luke 15:31).

"You didn't have to earn a goat. Everything I have is already yours. You're not a servant working for wages. You're a son with an inheritance. You could have had a party anytime—everything's already yours."

The older brother had access to everything but lived like a slave because he didn't understand sonship.

And that's what most Christians do. We're in the Father's house. We have access to everything. The inheritance is ours. But we live like slaves, working to earn what's already been freely given.

STOP WORKING FOR WAGES. RECEIVE YOUR INHERITANCE.

Here's the practical application: stop working for wages and start receiving your inheritance.

Stop trying to earn God's love. You already have it. Fully. Completely. Unconditionally. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Stop trying to earn God's acceptance. You're already accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). Christ's acceptance is yours. His standing before the Father is your standing.

Stop trying to earn spiritual blessings through performance. You already have "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Not some. Every. All of them. Already yours.

Stop trying to earn your position in God's family. You're already adopted. Permanently. Irrevocably. The Spirit in your heart cries "Abba! Father!" because you ARE a son, you ARE a daughter.

Stop trying to earn your inheritance. You already have it. "The inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4).

Everything you're working to earn, you already have. Everything you're striving to achieve, you already possess. Everything you're trying to prove yourself worthy of, you've already been given.

Not because you've earned it. But because you're family.

And family doesn't earn. Family inherits.

LIVE LIKE THE SON YOU ARE

So here's the call: stop living like a slave and start living like the son you are.

When you wake up tomorrow morning, don't approach God as a slave approaching a master, hoping to earn approval through your quiet time. Approach Him as a beloved child running to Abba.

When you face temptation, don't fight it as a slave trying to avoid punishment. Resist it as a son who has a new nature and doesn't have to be enslaved anymore.

When you serve, don't serve from obligation or duty. Serve from the overflow of receiving your Father's abundant love and wanting to express it to others.

When you fail, don't cower in fear of punishment. Run to your Father, knowing He receives you, forgives you, and restores you—not because you've earned it but because you're His child.

When you pray, don't beg as a slave hoping to get the master's attention. Ask boldly as a son who has confident access to a generous Father.

When you read Scripture, don't do it to earn points with God. Receive it as your inheritance—words from Father to child.

You are no longer a slave.

You are a son. You are a daughter. You are an heir.

The Spirit of God's Son is in your heart, crying "Abba! Father!"

Stop dragging around the dead man's slave mentality.

Start living from your sonship.

Everything changes from here.

Application Questions

- 1. In what areas of your Christian life are you still operating from slave mentality instead of son/daughter mentality?**
- 2. When you approach God in prayer, do you come as a fearful slave or as a confident child? What would change if you really believed you could cry "Abba! Father!"?**
- 3. Are you trying to earn wages from God (performing to get approval) or receive inheritance (trusting you already have everything in Christ)? What's the difference in your daily life?**
- 4. Which of the four shifts (earning to receiving, fear to love, obligation to devotion, trying to trusting) is most challenging for you? Why?**
- 5. If you truly believed your relationship with God is based on Christ's performance (not yours), what would you stop doing? What would you start doing?**
- 6. Are you more like the younger prodigal (trying to earn your way back as a servant after failing) or the older brother (serving perfectly but with a slave's heart)? How does the Father's response to both challenge your thinking?**
- 7. What inheritance from God are you trying to earn through performance instead of receiving by faith as His child?**
- 8. How would your obedience change if it flowed from love and security as a son/daughter instead of from fear and obligation as a slave?**

9. Where are you growing FOR sonship (trying to become worthy) instead of FROM sonship (learning to live like the child you already are)?

PART THREE: THE DEAD MAN WE KEEP DRAGGING AROUND

CHAPTER 9

Why We Exhume What God Has Buried

"Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" — Colossians 3:9-10 (NASB)

Stop lying to yourself.

That's what this passage is really saying. Don't lie to one another, sure—but the deepest lie we tell is the one we tell ourselves.

The lie that the old self is still alive. The lie that we're still who we used to be. The lie that we need to keep managing, controlling, and improving what God says is already dead and buried.

Paul says, "You laid aside the old self." Past tense. Done. Finished. You took it off like old clothes and threw it away.

But we keep going back to the dumpster, fishing out those filthy rags, and putting them back on. We keep exhumeing what God has buried. We keep resurrecting what Christ crucified. We keep dragging around the corpse of the old man, convinced that we still need him.

And then we wonder why we stink of death instead of radiating resurrection life.

This is the great tragedy of the Christian life: we have everything we need in Christ, we ARE new creations, the old has passed away and the new has come—but we keep living as if none of that is true.

We keep lying to ourselves about who we are.

And the lie sounds so spiritual, so humble, so sincere: "I'm just a sinner. I'm broken. I'm messed up. I need to keep working on my old nature. I need to keep dying to myself. I need to keep crucifying my flesh."

But that's not humility. That's unbelief dressed up in religious language.

God says the old self is dead. We say he's still alive and we need to keep killing him.

God says you've laid aside the old self. We say we're still wearing it and trying to clean it up.

God says you've put on the new self. We say we're trying to become new someday.

Who's lying? God or us?

It's time to stop lying to ourselves and start believing what God says is true.

THE COMMAND TO STOP LYING TO OURSELVES

"Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self..."

The context here is about truthfulness in community—don't lie to each other. But there's a deeper principle at work: you can't tell the truth to others if you're lying to yourself.

And the foundational lie we tell ourselves is this: "I'm still the old me."

We lie to ourselves about our identity. We lie about what God has done. We lie about who we are in Christ. We lie about the old self being dead.

And these lies produce more lies:

- "I can't help it—that's just who I am." (Lie. That's who you *were*.)
- "I'll always struggle with this." (Lie. You're a new creation.)
- "I'm just a sinner saved by grace." (Half-truth. You're a saint who sometimes sins.)
- "My old nature keeps pulling me back." (Lie. Your old nature is dead.)
- "I need to die to myself daily." (Misleading. You already died; now reckon it true.)

These lies keep us in bondage to an identity God has already destroyed. They keep us dragging around a corpse God has already buried. They keep us living from death instead of life.

Paul says, "Stop it. Stop lying to yourselves. You laid aside the old self. Past tense. Done. Now live from that reality."

But we don't. We keep the lie alive because, somehow, the lie feels safer than the truth.

"LAID ASIDE" (PAST TENSE) VS. OUR PRESENT PRACTICE

Notice the tense: "You laid aside the old self."

Not "you should lay aside" or "you need to lay aside" or "try to lay aside."

You *laid aside*. Past tense. Completed action. Already done.

The old self has been removed like old clothes. You took it off. You threw it away. You're not wearing it anymore.

Except we are. We keep putting it back on.

God says, "You laid aside the old self with its evil practices."

But we practice the old practices. We think the old thoughts. We operate from the old operating system. We function from the old identity.

Not because we have to. Not because the old self is still alive and forcing us to. But because we *choose* to. Because we keep going back to what's familiar, what's comfortable, what we know how to operate.

It's like wearing your old, ratty, stained, torn bathrobe even though you've been given a brand new set of royal robes. The new clothes are hanging in the closet. They're yours. They fit perfectly. They're appropriate for your position as a child of the King.

But you keep putting on the old bathrobe because it's familiar, because you know how to wear it, because you're not sure you're really worthy of the royal robes.

So you walk around the palace in a ratty bathrobe, wondering why you don't feel like royalty.

You laid aside the old self. Past tense. It's off. It's gone. It's in the trash.

But in practice, we keep digging it out and putting it back on.

Why?

REASON 1: FAMILIARITY — WE KNOW HOW TO OPERATE FROM SHAME AND PERFORMANCE

The old self, for all his corruption and condemnation, had one advantage: he was familiar.

You knew how that guy worked. You understood his operating system. You were fluent in his language. You knew his patterns, his triggers, his coping mechanisms, his defense strategies.

Shame? You know how to operate from shame. It's been your fuel for years, maybe decades. Shame tells you you're not good enough, and you know exactly what to do with that message: try harder, perform better, prove yourself worthy.

Performance? That's your native language. You've been performing for approval since childhood—for your parents, your teachers, your peers, your boss, your spouse. Performing for God is just an extension of what you've always done.

The old self's shame-and-performance system is familiar. Comfortable. Predictable. You know the rules. You know how to play the game. You might not be winning, but at least you understand how it works.

But the new self? That operates on completely different principles:

- Grace instead of shame
- Identity instead of performance
- Rest instead of striving
- Receiving instead of earning
- Trusting instead of controlling

That's foreign territory. Unfamiliar. Disorienting. You don't know how to operate from there yet.

So when stress comes, when temptation hits, when you fail, where do you default? To the familiar. To shame and performance. To the old self's operating system.

Not because you have to. But because you know how.

It's like learning a new language. When you're stressed or tired, you default back to your native tongue. Even though you've been given a new language (the language of sonship, grace, and identity), when things get hard, you revert to the old language (the language of slavery, shame, and performance).

The old self is familiar. And familiarity feels safer than faith.

REASON 2: CONTROL — THE OLD SELF IS PREDICTABLE; THE NEW REQUIRES FAITH

Here's another reason we keep exhuming the old self: he's controllable.

Or at least we think he is. We think if we just manage him well enough, discipline him hard enough, control him tightly enough, we can keep him in line.

The old self operates on cause and effect:

- "If I pray enough, God will be pleased."

- "If I read my Bible daily, I'll grow spiritually."
- "If I avoid certain sins, I'll be righteous."
- "If I serve in church, I'll be valuable."

It's predictable. Measurable. Controllable. You do A, you get B. You perform well, you feel good about yourself. You perform poorly, you feel bad. It's simple.

But the new self? That operates on faith, not formulas. On grace, not guarantees. On relationship, not rules.

You can't control grace. You can't manage gift. You can't manipulate relationship. You can't force fruit.

The new self requires you to trust what you can't see, believe what you can't measure, rest in what you can't control.

And that's terrifying.

Control gives us the illusion of safety. "If I can just manage my old nature well enough, I'll be okay. If I can just control my behavior tightly enough, I'll be acceptable. If I can just produce enough good fruit, I'll be worthy."

But that's the old self's lie. You were never in control. You were enslaved. The "control" was actually bondage.

The new self offers freedom—but freedom requires faith. You have to trust that Christ in you is enough. That His life in you will produce what your effort never could. That His power in you is greater than your control ever was.

And we'd rather have the illusion of control than the reality of trust.

So we keep going back to the old self, trying to manage what's already dead, because at least that feels like we're doing something.

REASON 3: RELIGIOUS TRAINING — WE WERE TAUGHT TO IMPROVE THE OLD, NOT EMBRACE THE NEW

Most of us were raised—whether in church or in the broader culture—with a self-improvement gospel.

We were taught:

- "Try harder."

- "Be better."
- "Work on yourself."
- "Improve your character."
- "Fix your flaws."
- "Overcome your weaknesses."

Even in Christian settings, the message was often: "You're a sinner. You're broken. You're messed up. Now work really hard to become less sinful, less broken, less messed up."

The goal was improvement of the old self, not embracing the new self.

Nobody told us the old self was dead. Nobody explained that we're new creations. Nobody taught us that Christ's life in us is our only hope of transformation.

Instead, we got spiritual self-help: "Ten steps to overcome your flesh. Five keys to dying to self. Seven habits of highly effective Christians."

All of it predicated on the assumption that the old self is still alive and needs to be trained, managed, improved.

So we spent years—decades—trying to make the old man behave. Trying to get the flesh under control. Trying to crucify ourselves daily. Trying to die to self through discipline and effort.

And it never worked. Because you can't improve what God has already executed. You can't rehabilitate what God has already condemned. You can't fix what God has already replaced.

But we keep trying because that's what we were taught. That's the only Christianity many of us have ever known.

The gospel of "Christ in you" sounds too easy. Too passive. Too good to be true.

The gospel of "work harder to fix yourself" sounds more responsible, more serious, more committed.

So we choose the dead-man-improvement program over the new-creation reality.

Not because it works. But because it's what we know.

REASON 4: UNBELIEF — WE DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THE OLD MAN IS DEAD

Here's the brutal truth: we keep digging up the old man because we don't really believe he's dead.

We believe it theologically. We can quote the verses. We can explain the doctrine. We know what we're supposed to believe.

But functionally? Practically? In our day-to-day experience? We don't believe it.

Because if we really believed the old man was dead, we'd stop trying to manage him. We'd stop trying to improve him. We'd stop trying to control him. We'd stop giving him attention, energy, and power.

But we don't. We keep focusing on him, fighting him, fearing him.

Why? Because we look at our ongoing struggles with sin and conclude: "If the old man were really dead, I wouldn't still be dealing with this. Therefore, he must still be alive."

It's the evidence-based theology: "I see evidence of the flesh, therefore the old nature must still be alive."

But that's backwards. The old nature is dead. What you're seeing is the residual effects of years of training in the old operating system. The habits. The patterns. The neural pathways. The learned behaviors.

It's like phantom limb syndrome—people who've lost a limb can still feel pain in the missing arm or leg. The limb is gone, but the brain still sends signals to it.

The old self is gone, but the patterns remain. The nature is dead, but the habits persist.

And we interpret those lingering habits as evidence that the old nature is still alive.

So we keep trying to kill what's already dead. We keep trying to manage what's already been crucified. We keep trying to improve what God has already replaced.

All because we don't really believe God when He says, "The old self was crucified with Christ."

We say we believe it. But our behavior reveals what we actually believe: that the old man is still alive and we're responsible for keeping him dead.

That's not faith. That's unbelief.

REASON 5: FEAR OF GRACE — IT SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

Finally, we keep resurrecting the old man because we're afraid of grace.

Grace says: "You're dead. Christ lives in you. You're new. The old is gone. You're free. You're righteous. You're accepted. You're a son. Everything's already given."

And something in us recoils: "That can't be right. That's too easy. That's too good. There has to be a catch. There has to be something I need to do to earn it, maintain it, deserve it."

Grace offends our sense of fairness. Our need for control. Our desire to contribute. Our pride in self-effort.

We'd rather have a system where our effort matters, our work counts, our performance determines our standing. Because then we can take credit. Then we can feel like we've earned it. Then we can maintain the illusion that we're in control.

But grace strips all that away. Grace says: "You didn't earn it. You can't maintain it. You don't deserve it. It's all gift. All Christ. All done."

And that's terrifying.

Because if it's all grace, then:

- We can't contribute to our salvation
- We can't boast in our achievements
- We can't control our standing
- We can't take credit for transformation
- We can't measure our progress by our effort

We're completely dependent on Christ. Utterly reliant on grace. Totally trusting in gift.

And that feels dangerous. Irresponsible. Passive. Lazy.

"Surely," we think, "there has to be something I need to do. Surely I can't just rest in grace. Surely I need to keep working on my old nature."

So we reject grace—not consciously, not intentionally, but functionally. We keep dragging around the old man because maintaining the old system feels safer than trusting the new reality.

"My ego is not my amigo," Brennan Manning said.

Our ego wants to contribute. Wants to achieve. Wants to earn. Wants to prove. Wants to maintain control.

But grace destroys the ego's agenda. Grace says the old self—including the ego—is dead. And Christ is all.

That's too much for the ego to accept. So we keep resuscitating what grace has killed.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES: HOW WE RESURRECT THE DEAD MAN

Let's get specific. How does this actually play out in daily Christian life?

Returning to Performance-Based Acceptance

The Lie: "I need to perform well spiritually so God will accept me."

The Truth: You're already accepted in Christ. Your performance doesn't determine your standing.

What It Looks Like:

- You have a good quiet time and feel closer to God
- You skip your Bible reading and feel distant from God
- You serve at church and feel valuable
- You don't serve and feel guilty
- You obey and feel approved
- You fail and feel rejected

Your emotional state fluctuates based on your spiritual performance. Why? Because you've gone back to the old self's operating system: performance-based acceptance.

But you're not the old self anymore. You're a new creation. Your acceptance is in Christ, not in your performance. His performance determines your standing, not yours.

When you tie your sense of acceptance to your performance, you're lying to yourself about who you are. You're treating yourself like the old self (who had to earn acceptance) instead of the new self (who's already accepted in the Beloved).

Measuring Spirituality by Effort

The Lie: "The harder I try, the more spiritual I am."

The Truth: Spirituality isn't measured by effort but by dependence on Christ.

What It Looks Like:

- You measure your spiritual maturity by how many spiritual disciplines you're maintaining
- You feel guilty when you're not "doing enough" for God
- You compare your effort to others' and either feel proud (I'm doing more) or ashamed (I'm doing less)
- You equate busyness in ministry with closeness to God
- You think the struggle itself proves you're serious about holiness

This is the old self's metric: effort equals spirituality. The harder you work, the more devoted you are. The more you do, the more you're worth.

But the new self operates differently: abiding equals fruitfulness. Receiving equals transformation. Trusting equals growth.

The vine doesn't measure the branch's spirituality by how hard it's trying to produce grapes. The vine measures fruit. And fruit comes from abiding, not from trying.

When you measure spirituality by effort, you're back in the old self's performance system.

Self-Condemnation as a Motivator

The Lie: "If I beat myself up enough when I fail, maybe I'll do better next time."

The Truth: Self-condemnation doesn't produce transformation; it produces shame, which drives you back to the old identity.

What It Looks Like:

- You sin and spend the next three days in self-flagellation
- You think God is disappointed in you and you need to earn your way back into His good graces
- You use guilt as motivation: "I'm terrible. I need to do better."
- You believe harsh self-talk is evidence of taking sin seriously
- You think feeling bad about yourself is the same as repentance

This is the old self's playbook: shame-driven behavior modification. Beat yourself up when you fail, and maybe the pain will keep you from failing again.

But shame doesn't produce life. It produces death. Shame doesn't lead to transformation. It leads to hiding, performing, and more shame.

The new self doesn't operate on shame. The new self operates on identity: "That behavior is inconsistent with who I am in Christ. I'm not going to agree with it. I'm going to return to living from my new nature."

Shame says, "I'm bad." Identity says, "I'm new."

When you use self-condemnation as a motivator, you're dragging around the old self's shame-based operating system.

Shame-Driven Behavior Modification

The Lie: "If I feel bad enough about my sin, I'll stop doing it."

The Truth: Shame doesn't change behavior long-term; it just drives it underground.

What It Looks Like:

- You focus intensely on "putting off" sinful behaviors through sheer willpower
- You create elaborate accountability structures to manage your flesh
- You use fear of exposure as motivation to avoid sin
- You think the answer to failure is trying harder next time
- You believe if you just discipline yourself enough, you can get the old nature under control

This is classic old-self thinking: the flesh can be managed through discipline and shame. If you just control it tightly enough, monitor it carefully enough, punish it severely enough when it acts up, you can keep it in line.

But the old self is dead. You're not managing a living nature. You're dragging around a corpse and wondering why behavior modification isn't working.

The new self approaches sin differently: "I'm a new creation with a new nature. This sin is inconsistent with who I am. I'm going to live from my new identity in Christ instead of from old patterns."

Not shame-driven behavior modification. Identity-based transformation.

When you try to change behavior through shame, you're operating from the old self's playbook.

THE PATTERN: WE KEEP GOING BACK TO WHAT WE KNOW

Do you see the pattern in all of these?

We keep going back to the old self's operating system:

- Performance for acceptance
- Effort as measurement
- Shame as motivator
- Behavior modification as solution

Why? Because we know how that system works. We're familiar with it. We were trained in it. We believe it (functionally, even if not theologically). And we're afraid of the alternative (grace).

So we keep exhuming what God has buried. We keep resurrecting what Christ crucified. We keep dragging around the corpse of the old man.

And then we wonder why we're exhausted. Why we're not experiencing freedom. Why the Christian life feels so hard.

It's because we're lying to ourselves.

We're saying we believe the old self is dead while we live as if he's alive.

We're claiming we've laid aside the old self while we keep putting him back on.

We're declaring we're new creations while we operate from the old corruption.

"Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices."

It's time to stop lying. Time to stop the resurrection efforts. Time to stop dragging around the dead man.

THE TRUTH YOU NEED TO BELIEVE

Here's the truth you need to believe—really believe, not just acknowledge:

The old self is dead. Not dying. Not mostly dead. Dead. Crucified with Christ. Buried with Him. Gone.

You've laid aside the old self. Past tense. Done. You took it off. It's not on you anymore unless you choose to put it back on.

You've put on the new self. You're not trying to become new. You are new. Already. Fully. Completely.

The new self is being renewed. Present, continuous tense. The transformation is happening. Not by your effort, but by Christ's life in you.

You are being renewed to a true knowledge. True knowledge of what? Of who you are. Of whose you are. Of your identity in Christ.

The lie is that you're still the old you and you need to work really hard to become new.

The truth is that you're already new and you need to stop lying to yourself about it.

WHAT CHANGES WHEN YOU STOP LYING

What would change if you stopped lying to yourself about who you are?

When you fail: Instead of shame-spiraling, you'd say, "That's not who I am anymore. I'm a new creation. I'm going to live from my new identity."

When you're tempted: Instead of trying harder to resist in your own strength, you'd say, "Christ in me is not drawn to that. I'm going to trust His life in me."

When you serve: Instead of performing to earn approval, you'd say, "I'm serving from the overflow of being loved. My Father delights in me already."

When you pray: Instead of trying to earn God's attention, you'd say, "I'm talking to Abba. He loves hearing from me because I'm His child."

When you measure your spirituality: Instead of counting your effort, you'd ask, "Am I abiding in Christ? Am I living from my new identity?"

Everything changes when you stop lying to yourself and start believing the truth.

STOP DIGGING UP THE CORPSE

Here's the call: stop digging up the corpse of the old man.

Stop trying to rehabilitate him. Stop trying to improve him. Stop trying to manage him. Stop trying to control him.

He's dead. Let him stay dead.

You've laid aside the old self. Stop putting him back on.

You've put on the new self. Start living from what you're already wearing.

You are being renewed. Trust the process. Trust the One doing the renewing. Trust that Christ in you is sufficient.

Stop lying to yourself about who you are.

You're not the old you trying to become new.

You're the new you learning to live from your new identity.

The old has passed away. The new has come.

Stop exhuming what God has buried.

It's time to leave the dead man dead.

Application Questions

- 1. Which of the five reasons for resurrecting the dead man resonates most with you: familiarity, control, religious training, unbelief, or fear of grace? Why?**
- 2. What lies are you telling yourself about your identity? How do those lies keep you bound to the old self's operating system?**
- 3. In which practical area (performance-based acceptance, measuring by effort, self-condemnation, shame-driven modification) are you most likely to resurrect the dead man?**
- 4. If you really believed the old self is dead (not just theologically but functionally), what would you stop doing today?**
- 5. What would it look like to approach your current struggle from "I'm new and this is inconsistent with who I am" instead of "I'm still the old me and I need to try harder"?**
- 6. Where are you using shame as a motivator instead of living from your new identity? How is that working for you?**
- 7. What evidence are you using to convince yourself the old man is still alive? How might that evidence actually point to old patterns rather than old nature?**
- 8. If you stopped lying to yourself about who you are, how would your relationship with God change? Your approach to sin? Your daily life?**

CHAPTER 10

The Weight of Dragging a Corpse

"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" — Hebrews 12:1 (NASB)

You're tired.

Not just physically tired. Soul-tired. Bone-tired. The kind of exhaustion that sleep doesn't fix and vacation doesn't cure.

You're tired of trying. Tired of failing. Tired of the constant effort to be good enough, do enough, prove enough. Tired of measuring yourself. Tired of monitoring yourself. Tired of the relentless internal dialogue that analyzes every thought, critiques every action, and reminds you that you're still not quite there yet.

You're tired of dragging around the dead man.

Because that's what's exhausting you. Not the Christian life itself—that's supposed to be a light burden and an easy yoke (Matthew 11:30). Not serving God—that's supposed to be life-giving and joy-producing. Not pursuing holiness—that's supposed to be restful when it flows from your new nature.

What's exhausting you is the weight of maintaining a dead identity. The burden of trying to manage what God says is already crucified. The constant effort of dragging around the corpse of the old man while trying to run the race God has set before you.

The writer of Hebrews says it plainly: "Let us lay aside every encumbrance."

An encumbrance is a weight. A burden. Something that slows you down. Something that makes the race harder than it needs to be. Something that's not meant to be carried while you're running.

And the biggest encumbrance most Christians carry isn't a particular sin or a specific weakness. It's the dead man himself—the old identity we keep trying to rehabilitate, the old operating system we keep trying to run, the old self we refuse to leave buried.

You can't run the race carrying a corpse.

And you're exhausted because you keep trying.

THE EXHAUSTION OF MAINTAINING A DEAD IDENTITY

Let's be honest about what it costs to drag around the old man.

The old identity wasn't designed to coexist with the new. You can't simultaneously live as a new creation while maintaining the old creation's patterns. You can't be a son and still operate as a slave. You can't have Christ as your life and still try to generate life from the dead man.

But we try. And it's killing us.

Not literally (though the stress is real). But spiritually, emotionally, mentally—we're dying under the weight of trying to maintain an identity God has already executed.

Think about what it takes to keep the dead man "alive":

Constant vigilance. You have to monitor yourself constantly. "Am I being humble enough? Am I serving enough? Am I praying enough? Am I sinning too much? Am I growing fast enough?" The old man required constant self-examination to make sure he was measuring up. So you've internalized that surveillance system, and now there's a running commentary in your head analyzing your every move.

Continuous effort. The dead man only "works" if you're constantly working. He requires perpetual effort to maintain the illusion that he's alive and functional. So you work. And work. And work. Because the moment you stop, the whole house of cards collapses and you're confronted with the reality that you're dragging around a corpse.

Chronic anxiety. The old man's standing was always uncertain. "Am I good enough? Have I done enough? Is God pleased with me?" That uncertainty never goes away as long as you're operating from the old identity. So you live in chronic anxiety about your spiritual status.

Endless comparison. The old man measured himself against others. "Am I doing better than them? Am I more spiritual? Am I less of a failure?" So you're constantly comparing your performance to others', which either produces pride (when you win the comparison) or shame (when you lose).

All of this takes energy. Enormous amounts of energy. Energy that was meant to be spent running the race, bearing fruit, loving people, enjoying God. But instead, you're burning all your energy just maintaining the dead man's systems.

And you're exhausted.

"ENCUMBRANCE" — THE WEIGHT THAT SLOWS US DOWN

The Greek word for "encumbrance" is *onkos*—bulk, mass, weight. Something that's cumbersome. Something that hinders movement. Something that makes what should be simple unnecessarily difficult.

In the context of running, it's like trying to sprint while wearing a heavy backpack. Or running a marathon in snow boots. Or competing in a race while carrying someone on your back.

You might be able to move. But not well. Not fast. Not freely. Not joyfully.

The weight slows you down.

And the old man is weight. Dead weight. Literally.

Everything about maintaining the old identity adds burden:

- Performance-based acceptance adds the weight of constant proving
- Shame-driven motivation adds the weight of chronic guilt
- Fear-based obedience adds the weight of perpetual anxiety
- Self-generated righteousness adds the weight of endless effort
- Measuring spirituality by works adds the weight of relentless comparison

None of this was meant to be carried. None of this is part of the race. None of this is the "light burden" Jesus promised.

It's all encumbrance. Extra weight. Dead weight. The corpse of the old man that you're dragging around while trying to run.

And the writer of Hebrews says: "Lay it aside."

Not "manage it better." Not "carry it more efficiently." Not "build up your strength so you can handle the weight."

Lay it aside. Put it down. Drop it. Leave it behind. Let it go.

Because you can't run the race God has set before you while carrying what God has already crucified.

WE CAN'T RUN THE RACE CARRYING A CORPSE

Imagine being in a marathon and seeing a runner attempting to compete while carrying a dead body on his back.

Everyone else is running freely, unencumbered, moving toward the finish line. But this guy is stumbling along, bent under the weight, exhausted, barely moving, wondering why running is so hard and why everyone else seems to be doing better than him.

You'd want to scream: "Put it down! You're not supposed to carry that! The race isn't supposed to be that hard!"

That's you. That's most Christians.

We're trying to run the race God has set before us while carrying the corpse of the old man. And then we wonder why we're exhausted. Why we can't keep up. Why the Christian life feels so heavy when Jesus said His yoke was easy and His burden was light.

The race isn't the problem. The weight is.

The Christian life isn't supposed to be this hard. Not because it's easy—there's endurance required, discipline needed, challenges to face. But it's not supposed to be the crushing burden that so many of us experience.

What makes it crushing is the encumbrance. The dead weight. The old identity we refuse to lay aside.

"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

You can run with endurance when you're unencumbered. When you're free. When you're not carrying what you were never meant to carry.

But you can't run with endurance when you're dragging a corpse.

So the writer says: lay aside the encumbrance. Put down the weight. Stop carrying the dead man.

Then run. Freely. Lightly. With the endurance that comes from living in resurrection life, not from trying to resurrect the dead.

THE BURDEN OF THE OLD MAN

Let's get specific about what the old man costs you. What burdens does maintaining his dead identity add to your life?

1. Constant Self-Monitoring

The old man required constant surveillance. You had to monitor yourself continuously to make sure you were measuring up, performing well, avoiding failure.

And if you're still operating from the old identity, that surveillance never stops.

You wake up and immediately start the internal analysis:

- "Did I pray long enough this morning?"
- "Was I focused enough in my quiet time?"
- "Am I being grateful enough for God's blessings?"
- "Should I have witnessed to that person I met yesterday?"

Throughout the day, the monitoring continues:

- "Was I patient enough with that difficult person?"
- "Did I have the right motives when I served?"
- "Am I thinking pure thoughts?"
- "Should I be doing more for God right now?"

Before bed, the review begins:

- "Was today productive enough spiritually?"
- "Did I waste too much time?"
- "Could I have prayed more?"
- "Should I read another chapter before I sleep?"

This constant self-monitoring is exhausting. It's like having a critical supervisor in your head who never clocks out, never takes a day off, never gives you a break.

And it's all rooted in the old man's performance-based identity: "If I monitor myself closely enough, maybe I can keep myself in line. Maybe I can perform well enough to be acceptable."

But you're not the old man anymore. You're a new creation. The constant surveillance is maintaining a dead identity that doesn't need monitoring—it needs burying.

2. Performance Anxiety

The old man lived in perpetual anxiety about his performance. "Am I doing enough? Am I good enough? Will I measure up?"

And if you're still dragging him around, that anxiety never goes away.

You're anxious about:

- **Spiritual performance:** "Am I growing fast enough? Am I disciplined enough? Am I holy enough?"
- **Ministry performance:** "Am I serving enough? Am I producing enough fruit? Am I valuable enough to the church?"
- **Relational performance:** "Am I loving people well enough? Am I being a good enough witness? Am I Christian enough in my interactions?"
- **Moral performance:** "Am I obeying enough? Am I avoiding sin enough? Am I pure enough?"

The anxiety is constant because the standard is constantly shifting. There's always more you could do. Always another level you could reach. Always someone who's doing it better than you.

This performance anxiety steals your peace. It robs you of rest. It turns every spiritual activity into a test you might fail.

Prayer becomes performance. Bible reading becomes measurement. Service becomes evaluation. Obedience becomes anxiety.

And underneath it all is the old man's lie: "Your standing with God depends on your performance. Better keep performing or you might lose His approval."

But that's not true. Your standing depends on Christ's performance, not yours. And His performance was perfect. Which means your standing is secure.

The anxiety is the old man's burden. And it's weight you were never meant to carry.

3. Chronic Guilt and Shame

The old man ran on shame. His fuel was "not enough." His motivation was guilt.

And if you're still maintaining his identity, shame is still your operating system.

You feel guilty about:

- What you did do (sins of commission)
- What you didn't do (sins of omission)
- What you should have done better
- What you should be doing more of

- What you should have done differently

And underneath the guilt is the deeper shame: "I'm not enough. I'm defective. I'm a failure. I'm broken beyond repair."

This chronic guilt and shame is toxic. It poisons everything:

- Your relationship with God: "He must be so disappointed in me."
- Your view of yourself: "I'm such a failure."
- Your approach to service: "Maybe if I do more, I'll feel less guilty."
- Your response to failure: "See? I knew I was worthless."

The guilt never goes away because the old man's metric was perfection—and you can't achieve perfection. So there's always something to feel guilty about. Always another reason for shame.

But you're not the old man anymore. You're a new creation in Christ. Guilt and shame are not your identity. They're not your fuel. They're not your motivation.

You have been forgiven. Completely. Fully. Finally. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

No condemnation. Not "less condemnation." Not "manageable condemnation." No condemnation.

The guilt and shame are the old man's burden. And they're crushing you under weight that was removed at the cross.

4. Religious Striving

The old man worked. Constantly. Strenuously. Exhaustingly.

He had to. His standing depended on his works. His acceptance required his achievement. His righteousness came from his religious activity.

And if you're still dragging him around, you're still striving.

You're striving to:

- Be holy enough
- Pray enough
- Read your Bible enough

- Serve enough
- Witness enough
- Give enough
- Sacrifice enough
- Grow enough

The striving never stops because "enough" never comes. There's always more. Always another step. Always a higher level. Always someone holier, more devoted, more disciplined than you.

So you strive. And strive. And strive. And wonder why you're so tired.

Religious striving is different from pursuing holiness. Pursuing holiness flows from your new identity—"I'm holy in Christ; let me live from that reality." Religious striving flows from the old identity—"I need to become holy through my efforts."

One is restful. The other is relentless.

One produces fruit. The other produces fatigue.

One comes from abiding. The other comes from achieving.

The striving is the old man's treadmill. And you're running yourself to death on it while going nowhere.

5. The Treadmill of "Never Enough"

This is where all the other burdens converge: the perpetual sense that you're never enough.

Never praying enough. Never reading enough. Never serving enough. Never holy enough.

Never loving enough. Never growing enough. Never obedient enough.

Never. Enough.

This "never enough" treadmill is the essence of the old man's existence. He was trying to earn what he could never achieve. Trying to become what he could never be. Trying to prove what could never be proven through his efforts.

And the treadmill never stops. Because "enough" is always just out of reach.

You pray an hour and think, "I should pray two hours." You read a chapter and think, "I should read five chapters." You serve at church and think, "I should serve more." You overcome one sin and immediately focus on the next one.

Progress doesn't bring peace. Achievement doesn't bring satisfaction. Success doesn't silence the voice that says, "Not enough. Do more. Be more. Try harder."

Because the treadmill doesn't have a finish line. It just goes and goes and goes. And you're exhausted from running without getting anywhere.

But here's the truth: you ARE enough. In Christ. His "enough" is your enough. His "finished" is your finished. His "it is accomplished" is your accomplishment.

The treadmill is the old man's prison. And you're free. You just need to believe it and step off.

WHAT IT COSTS

Let's talk about what dragging around the dead man costs you. Not just what it feels like (exhausting), but what it actually steals from you.

It Costs You Joy

Joy is the fruit of living from your new identity. It comes from knowing you're loved, accepted, delighted in by your Father. It flows from resting in finished work instead of striving for acceptance.

But you can't have joy while dragging around the old man. Because the old man operated on fear, shame, and performance. And those things are joy-killers.

When you're constantly monitoring yourself, you can't rejoice—you're too busy evaluating.

When you're anxious about your performance, you can't celebrate—you're too worried about whether you're measuring up.

When you're chronically guilty, you can't delight—you're too busy condemning yourself.

When you're religiously striving, you can't rest—you're too exhausted.

When you're on the "never enough" treadmill, you can't be satisfied—you're always focused on what you lack.

The old man steals your joy. And replaces it with anxiety, guilt, and exhaustion.

It Costs You Peace

"The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

Peace comes from resting in Christ. From trusting that your standing is secure. From knowing that you're loved, accepted, and complete in Him.

But dragging around the old man keeps your mind set on the flesh—on performance, achievement, self-effort, proving, earning.

And that produces death, not peace.

You have no peace when:

- You're constantly monitoring yourself
- You're anxious about your performance
- You're chronically guilty
- You're religiously striving
- You're on the "never enough" treadmill

Peace requires rest. But the old man never rests. So you don't rest. And you wonder why you have no peace.

It Costs You Authentic Relationships

The old man couldn't have authentic relationships. He was too busy performing, hiding, managing his image.

He couldn't be real because real meant admitting imperfection. And imperfection threatened his standing, his acceptance, his worth.

So he wore masks. Put up fronts. Managed perceptions. Controlled the narrative.

And if you're still dragging him around, you're still doing that.

You can't be authentic with others when you're not being authentic with yourself. You can't admit struggles when you're trying to maintain the image of having it all together. You can't be vulnerable when vulnerability threatens the performance-based identity you're trying to maintain.

So your relationships stay surface. Safe. Controlled. Lonely.

You have relationships, but not authentic ones. You have conversations, but not real ones. You have community, but not connection.

Because the dead man required image management. And image management kills authenticity.

It Costs You Spiritual Vitality

This is the great irony: the old man's religious striving actually kills spiritual vitality.

You'd think all that effort, all that discipline, all that work would produce vibrant spiritual life. But it doesn't. It produces death.

"For the mind set on the flesh is death."

When you're dragging around the dead man, trying to generate righteousness through self-effort, maintaining the old performance-based system, you're operating in the flesh. And the flesh produces death, not life.

Spiritual vitality comes from abiding in Christ. From living from your new identity. From receiving His life instead of trying to generate your own.

But the old man can't do that. He only knows how to work, strive, perform, achieve.

So you end up with a lot of religious activity but no spiritual vitality. A lot of motion but no life. A lot of effort but no fruit.

You're spiritually exhausted because you're trying to produce life from death.

It Costs You Rest

Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Rest. That's what Jesus offers. Rest for your souls.

But you can't experience that rest while dragging around the old man. Because the old man never rests. Can't rest. Won't rest.

Rest requires:

- Trusting that the work is finished
- Believing that your standing is secure
- Knowing that you're accepted apart from performance
- Resting in Christ's accomplishment instead of your own

But the old man can't do any of that. He has to keep working, keep proving, keep earning, keep striving.

So you have no rest. Even when you physically stop, you can't mentally or emotionally rest. The surveillance continues. The anxiety persists. The guilt gnaws. The striving doesn't stop.

You're exhausted because the old man never sleeps.

And you'll never rest until you lay him aside.

"THE LORD IS NOT LOOKING FOR PERFORMERS"

"The Lord is not looking for performers," Graham Cooke said. "He's looking for children who know they are loved."

Read that again. Let it sink in.

God is not looking for performers. He's not evaluating your spiritual productivity. He's not measuring your religious output. He's not grading your performance.

He's looking for children who know they are loved.

Not children who are trying to earn love through performance. Not children who are working to maintain love through achievement. Not children who are proving their worth through religious activity.

Children who *know* they are loved. Already. Completely. Unconditionally.

That's a completely different paradigm than the old man's.

The old man performed to get love. The child receives love and responds from it.

The old man worked to earn acceptance. The child rests in acceptance already given.

The old man strived to prove worth. The child knows worth is inherent in being family.

Everything the old man did to try to secure love, acceptance, and worth—God freely gives to His children.

You don't have to perform. You don't have to prove. You don't have to earn.

You just have to receive. Believe. Rest.

Know that you are loved. Not because of your performance. But because you're His child.

And when you know you're loved—really know it, deep in your bones—everything changes.

The monitoring stops. (I'm loved; I don't need to constantly check my performance.) The anxiety ends. (I'm loved; my standing is secure.) The guilt lifts. (I'm loved; there is no

condemnation.) The striving ceases. (I'm loved; I don't need to earn what's already mine.) The treadmill stops. (I'm loved; I'm enough because Christ is enough.)

And suddenly, you have what the old man could never give you:

- Joy (in being loved)
- Peace (in being secure)
- Authentic relationships (no need for masks)
- Spiritual vitality (life flows from being loved)
- Rest (the work is finished)

LAY ASIDE THE ENCUMBRANCE

"Let us lay aside every encumbrance."

The old man is the encumbrance. The dead identity is the weight. The performance-based system is the burden.

And you're called to lay it aside.

Not manage it better. Not carry it more efficiently. Lay it aside. Put it down. Drop it. Leave it behind.

You can't run the race God has set before you while carrying the corpse of the old man.

You can't experience the abundant life while dragging around the old identity's burdens.

You can't rest in Christ's finished work while maintaining the old man's religious striving.

You can't know you're loved as a child while performing like a slave.

Something has to be laid aside. And it's not the race. It's not the calling. It's not the pursuit of holiness.

It's the encumbrance. The weight. The dead man.

Lay him aside. Finally. Fully. Permanently.

And run. Not with the crushing burden of maintaining a dead identity. But with the light burden of knowing you're loved.

Not as a performer trying to earn approval. But as a child who knows they are loved.

The race is still before you. But you don't have to run it carrying a corpse.

Lay aside the encumbrance. And run freely.

Application Questions

- 1. Which burden of the old man is weighing you down most: constant self-monitoring, performance anxiety, chronic guilt/shame, religious striving, or the "never enough" treadmill?**
- 2. What has dragging around the dead man cost you personally: joy, peace, authentic relationships, spiritual vitality, or rest?**
- 3. If you're exhausted from the Christian life, is it the race itself that's exhausting you—or the weight of the old identity you're trying to maintain?**
- 4. What would change in your daily life if you really believed "the Lord is not looking for performers, He's looking for children who know they are loved"?**
- 5. Where are you performing for God instead of receiving from Him? What's driving that performance?**
- 6. If you laid aside the encumbrance of the old man's performance-based system, what would you gain? What are you afraid you'd lose?**
- 7. What does rest look like for you? Not just physical rest, but soul-rest—the rest Jesus offers in Matthew 11:28-30? What's preventing you from experiencing it?**
- 8. If you stopped carrying the corpse of the old identity, how would your relationship with God change? How would your service change? How would your daily life change?**
- 9. Are you ready to lay aside the encumbrance? If not, what's holding you back? If so, what's your first step?**

CHAPTER 11

Spiritual Necromancy — Trying to Resurrect What God Killed

"for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." — Romans 8:13 (NASB)

Necromancy is forbidden in Scripture.

Deuteronomy 18:10-12 is clear: "There shall not be found among you anyone... who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD."

Why is it detestable? Because necromancy is the attempt to bring back what God has declared finished. It's the refusal to accept death as final. It's the insistence on communicating with, consulting, or resurrecting what should remain dead and buried.

And that's exactly what we do with the old man.

We practice spiritual necromancy every time we try to resurrect what God has killed. Every time we return to the flesh-patterns of the old identity. Every time we attempt to bring back to life what was crucified with Christ.

God says, "Your old self was crucified with Christ. Dead. Finished. Buried."

And we say, "Yes, but let me try to bring him back one more time. Maybe I can rehabilitate him. Maybe I can manage him. Maybe I can use him for something good."

That's necromancy. Spiritual necromancy.

And it's just as detestable to God as literal necromancy—not because He's being harsh, but because it's a rejection of what He accomplished at the cross. It's unbelief disguised as devotion. It's resistance to grace dressed up as responsibility.

We're trying to resurrect what God killed. And it's killing us in the process.

NECROMANCY: ATTEMPTING TO BRING BACK THE DEAD

In the ancient world, necromancy was the practice of consulting the dead for wisdom, power, or guidance. People believed they could summon the spirits of the deceased and gain advantage from them.

It was forbidden because:

1. It rejected God's final word on death
2. It sought power from death instead of life
3. It consulted the past instead of trusting God for the future
4. It treated what should be finished as still functional

Sound familiar?

That's what we do with the old man.

We reject God's final word: "The old self was crucified." We insist he's still alive.

We seek power from death: We try to generate righteousness from the dead flesh instead of receiving life from the Spirit.

We consult the past: We operate from the old identity, the old patterns, the old ways instead of trusting God's new creation.

We treat what's finished as functional: We act as if the old man still has something to offer, still needs to be managed, still has a role to play.

This is spiritual necromancy. And it's everywhere in Christian culture.

We've built entire systems of spiritual formation around the assumption that the old man is still alive and needs to be controlled, managed, suppressed, or trained.

We've created disciplines, programs, and accountability structures designed to keep the old nature in check—not realizing that we're trying to manage what God has already executed.

We're conducting séances with the dead man, trying to make him perform one more time, convinced that if we can just channel his energy in the right direction, maybe we can make something useful out of him.

But you can't resurrect what God has killed. You can only exhaust yourself trying.

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE FLESH = DEATH

Paul says it plainly: "If you are living according to the flesh, you must die."

Not "you might die" or "you risk dying" or "you could die if you're not careful."

You *must* die. It's inevitable. Guaranteed. Certain.

Living according to the flesh produces death. Always. Every time. Without exception.

What does it mean to live "according to the flesh"?

It means operating from the old man's system:

- Self-effort instead of Spirit-power
- Performance instead of identity
- Earning instead of receiving
- Trying instead of trusting
- Working to become instead of living from what you are

When you live according to the flesh—when you try to generate righteousness from the old operating system, when you attempt to produce holiness through self-effort, when you work to earn what's already been given—you're practicing spiritual necromancy.

You're trying to bring the dead man back to life and make him perform for God.

And it produces death.

Not just spiritual death. Practical death:

- Death of joy (replaced by joyless striving)
- Death of peace (replaced by performance anxiety)
- Death of freedom (replaced by bondage to rules)
- Death of vitality (replaced by religious exhaustion)
- Death of relationship (replaced by transaction)

Living according to the flesh kills everything Christ came to give you.

Because you're trying to generate life from death. And death only produces more death.

THE SPIRIT'S ROLE: PUTTING TO DEATH THE DEEDS, NOT RESURRECTING THE NATURE

But notice what Paul says next: "But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

The Spirit puts to death *the deeds of the body*—not the old nature. Why? Because the old nature is already dead.

The Spirit doesn't resurrect the old man and then help you kill him. He puts to death the *deeds*—the actions, the patterns, the practices that are inconsistent with your new identity.

This is crucial: You're not putting to death your old nature. That's already crucified. You're putting to death the behaviors that contradict your new nature.

Spiritual necromancy says: "I need to crucify my old nature daily."

The gospel says: "My old nature was crucified once-for-all. Now by the Spirit I'm putting to death the deeds that are inconsistent with my new nature."

Spiritual necromancy says: "I'm still the old man trying to become new."

The gospel says: "I'm the new man putting off old deeds."

Spiritual necromancy says: "The old nature is alive and I need to kill it."

The gospel says: "The old nature is dead and I need to stop resurrecting it."

Do you see the difference?

One is trying to kill what's already dead (which requires you to first resurrect it—necromancy).

The other is putting to death deeds that contradict who you already are (which is living from your new identity).

One is exhausting because you're constantly fighting a war that's already been won.

The other is restful (though still requiring effort) because you're living from victory that's already been accomplished.

The Spirit's role is not to help you resurrect the old man so you can kill him again. The Spirit's role is to empower you to live from your new nature and put to death anything that contradicts it.

FIVE FORMS OF SPIRITUAL NECROMANCY

Let's get specific. What does spiritual necromancy actually look like in daily Christian life?

1. Self-Improvement Gospel: Fixing the Old Instead of Living from the New

What it looks like:

- "I need to work on my anger."

- "I'm trying to become more patient."
- "I'm working on being less prideful."
- "I need to fix my anxious tendencies."

The necromancy: You're trying to improve the old man. You're treating the old nature as something that can be rehabilitated, trained, fixed.

The truth: You're not an angry person trying to become patient. You're a patient person (because you have Christ's nature) learning to live from that patience instead of from old anger patterns.

You're not trying to become less prideful. You're already humble in Christ; you're learning to express that humility instead of reverting to old pride.

Why it's seductive: It feels responsible. Proactive. Like you're taking your spiritual growth seriously.

Why it's deadly: It keeps you focused on fixing what's dead instead of living from what's new. It's self-effort disguised as sanctification. It's trying to resurrect the old man and make him better instead of living from the new man who's already complete in Christ.

2. Performance Christianity: Earning What's Already Been Given

What it looks like:

- "If I have a good quiet time, God will be pleased with me."
- "If I serve more at church, I'll be more valuable to God."
- "If I obey better, God will bless me more."
- "If I witness more, I'll be a better Christian."

The necromancy: You're operating from the old man's performance-based system. You're trying to earn what Christ already secured. You're working to achieve what you've already been given.

The truth: God is already pleased with you in Christ. You're already valuable as His child. You're already blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. You're already a faithful witness when you live from your new identity.

Why it's seductive: It gives you something to do. Something to control. Something to measure. It feels more serious than "just resting in grace."

Why it's deadly: It resurrects the old man's economy: wages instead of inheritance, earning instead of receiving, performance instead of position. It rejects the finished work of Christ and says, "Yes, but I need to add my performance to make it complete."

3. Shame-Based Sanctification: Using Guilt as a Motivator

What it looks like:

- "I feel so terrible about my sin. Maybe if I feel bad enough, I won't do it again."
- "God must be so disappointed in me. I need to do better to regain His favor."
- "I can't believe I did that again. I'm such a failure."
- "Maybe if I punish myself enough, I'll learn my lesson."

The necromancy: You're resurrecting the old man's shame-fuel. You're operating from the old identity that ran on guilt and condemnation.

The truth: "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Shame doesn't motivate transformation—it produces hiding, performing, and more shame. True change comes from believing your new identity, not from beating yourself up about failing to live up to the old one.

Why it's seductive: It seems to take sin seriously. It appears humble. It looks like genuine repentance.

Why it's deadly: Shame isn't from God. "The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret" (2 Corinthians 7:10). Godly sorrow leads to repentance—a change of mind about who you are and how you're living. Shame leads to death. You're using the old man's toxic fuel to try to power new man transformation. It doesn't work.

4. Religious Works: Building Your Own Righteousness

What it looks like:

- Impressive spiritual disciplines as evidence of devotion
- Extensive Bible knowledge as proof of maturity
- Sacrificial service as demonstration of commitment
- Public religious activity as validation of status

The necromancy: You're resurrecting the old man's project: building your own righteousness. Like the Pharisees. Like Paul before his conversion. Like everyone who tries to establish their own righteousness instead of receiving Christ's.

The truth: "For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3). You already have Christ's righteousness. You're not building it—you're living from it.

Why it's seductive: It produces impressive results. It looks spiritual. It earns respect from others. It gives you something to boast about (even if you pretend to be humble about it).

Why it's deadly: "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy" (Titus 3:5). Every attempt to build your own righteousness is a rejection of Christ's righteousness. You're saying, "Jesus, Your righteousness isn't quite enough. Let me add mine to complete it." That's not just necromancy—it's blasphemy disguised as devotion.

As Martin Luther explained: "God does not need your good works, but your neighbor does."

Your works aren't for God—to earn His favor, prove your worth, or establish your righteousness. Your works are for your neighbor—flowing from the righteousness you already have in Christ.

5. Legalism: Rules to Manage the Flesh Instead of Walking in the Spirit

What it looks like:

- Detailed rules about what you can/can't do
- Boundaries to keep the flesh in check
- Accountability structures to monitor behavior
- External controls to prevent sin

The necromancy: You're trying to control the old man through rules. You're treating the flesh as something that needs to be managed rather than something that's been crucified.

The truth: "For if you are living according to the Law, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13). The law was a guardian for the old man under sin. But you're not the old man anymore. You're a new creation, and you walk by the Spirit, not by law.

Why it's seductive: Rules provide clarity. Boundaries feel safe. External controls seem responsible. It looks like you're serious about holiness.

Why it's deadly: "For sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me" (Romans 7:11). The law doesn't restrain the flesh—it provokes it. Rules don't produce holiness—they reveal lack of it. You're trying to use the old man's system (law) to control the old man (flesh), not realizing that both are dead and you're a new creation who walks by the Spirit.

THE SEDUCTION OF SPIRITUAL NECROMANCY

Why are we so drawn to these forms of spiritual necromancy? Why do we keep resurrecting what God killed?

Because it feels more responsible than grace.

It Feels More "Responsible"

Resting in Christ's finished work feels passive. Dangerous. Like you're not taking your spiritual life seriously.

But working to improve yourself? Striving to earn God's favor? Using shame to motivate change? Building your own righteousness? Creating rules to control your flesh?

That feels responsible. Active. Serious. Committed.

The old man loved feeling responsible because it gave him control. And we're still addicted to that feeling.

But responsibility rooted in the old man's system isn't responsibility—it's rebellion against grace.

True responsibility is believing what God says and living from it. Trusting that Christ is sufficient. Resting in finished work. Walking by the Spirit instead of trying to manage the flesh.

It Seems More "Serious About Sin"

When you use shame as a motivator, beat yourself up for failing, create harsh rules to control yourself, you seem really serious about sin.

More serious than those "grace people" who just rest in forgiveness and talk about their identity in Christ.

But taking sin seriously doesn't mean resurrecting the old man to punish him. It means believing that sin is so serious, Christ had to die to deal with it. And He did. Fully. Finally. Completely.

You honor the seriousness of sin by trusting the sufficiency of Christ's death, not by trying to add your self-punishment to His sacrifice.

It Appears More "Committed"

When you're constantly working on yourself, striving for righteousness, building spiritual disciplines, maintaining accountability structures, you appear deeply committed.

More committed than those who just "rest in grace" and talk about "Christ in them."

But commitment to the old man's system isn't commitment to Christ. It's commitment to self-effort. To performance. To earning.

True commitment is dying to self (which already happened) and living from Christ (which is happening now). It's trusting Him more than you trust your effort. It's believing His work more than you believe your work.

That takes more commitment than religious performance. Because it requires dying to the ego's need to contribute, achieve, and take credit.

But It's Actually Unbelief Disguised as Devotion

Here's the brutal truth: all of this—the self-improvement, the performance, the shame, the works-righteousness, the legalism—is unbelief.

It's not trusting what God says is true:

- You don't believe the old man is really dead, so you keep trying to manage him
- You don't believe you're really new, so you keep trying to become new
- You don't believe Christ's righteousness is really yours, so you keep trying to build your own
- You don't believe grace is really sufficient, so you keep trying to add your performance
- You don't believe the Spirit is really enough, so you keep trying to control yourself through rules

It's unbelief. Dressed up as responsibility, seriousness, and commitment. But it's unbelief nonetheless.

And unbelief—even well-intentioned, religiously-motivated unbelief—produces death.

"For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die."

WHAT GOD KILLED SHOULD STAY DEAD

Here's the principle we need to embrace: What God killed should stay dead.

God didn't crucify the old man as a warning. Or as a threat. Or as a temporary measure until you proved you could manage him better.

God crucified the old man as a final solution to an unfixable problem.

The old man was:

- Condemned, not improvable
- Guilty, not fixable
- Dead in trespasses, not just sick
- Hostile to God, not just misbehaving

So God killed him. Executed him. Crucified him with Christ.

And that's final. Finished. Done.

You don't need to resurrect him to improve him. He's beyond improvement.

You don't need to bring him back to manage him. He's beyond management.

You don't need to revive him to train him. He's beyond training.

He's dead. And dead is where he needs to stay.

Every attempt to resurrect him—through self-improvement, performance, shame, works, or legalism—is spiritual necromancy. It's trying to bring back what God has declared finished.

And it's detestable to God. Not because He's harsh, but because it rejects what He accomplished at the cross.

WALK BY THE SPIRIT, NOT BY RESURRECTING THE FLESH

Paul gives us the alternative: "If by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

Not "if by your effort you are trying to kill your old nature."

Not "if by discipline you are managing your flesh."

Not "if by shame you are motivating yourself to change."

By the Spirit. The Spirit puts to death. The Spirit produces life. The Spirit transforms.

Your job isn't to resurrect the old man and try to make him behave. Your job is to walk by the Spirit and let Him put to death anything that contradicts your new nature.

What does that look like practically?

When you're tempted: Don't resurrect the old man's shame-motivation ("I'm terrible, I need to do better"). Walk by the Spirit: "I'm a new creation. This temptation contradicts who I am. Spirit, empower me to live from my new nature."

When you fail: Don't resurrect the old man's works-righteousness ("I need to do more to make up for this"). Walk by the Spirit: "This failure doesn't change my identity in Christ. I'm forgiven, accepted, loved. Spirit, show me the lie I believed that led to this behavior."

When you serve: Don't resurrect the old man's performance-Christianity ("I'm serving to earn God's favor"). Walk by the Spirit: "I'm serving from the overflow of being loved. Spirit, express Christ's love through me."

When you pursue holiness: Don't resurrect the old man's self-improvement ("I need to work on being more patient"). Walk by the Spirit: "I have Christ's patience in me. Spirit, help me live from that instead of from old patterns of impatience."

Do you see the difference?

One resurrects the dead man and tries to make him perform better.

The other lives from the new man and lets the Spirit put to death anything that contradicts that new identity.

One is spiritual necromancy. The other is walking by the Spirit.

STOP PRACTICING NECROMANCY

The call is clear: Stop trying to resurrect what God killed.

Stop with the self-improvement gospel. You're not fixing the old—you're living from the new.

Stop with the performance Christianity. You're not earning what's already given—you're receiving it.

Stop with the shame-based sanctification. You're not motivating change through guilt—you're believing your new identity.

Stop with the religious works-righteousness. You're not building your own righteousness—you're living from Christ's.

Stop with the legalism. You're not managing the flesh through rules—you're walking by the Spirit.

All of it is spiritual necromancy. All of it is trying to bring back what God declared dead. All of it is unbelief disguised as devotion.

"For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die."

The flesh is dead. Stop trying to resurrect it. Stop consulting it. Stop trying to rehabilitate it. Stop attempting to make it useful for God.

It's dead. And it needs to stay dead.

"But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

Walk by the Spirit. Live from your new nature. Trust Christ's work. Receive grace. Let the Spirit put to death anything that contradicts who you are in Christ.

That's not passivity. That's faith.

That's not irresponsibility. That's trust.

That's not lack of commitment. That's surrender to what God has already done.

Stop practicing spiritual necromancy.

The old man is dead. Leave him dead. And live—by the Spirit—from the new creation you are in Christ.

Application Questions

- 1. Which form of spiritual necromancy are you most prone to: self-improvement gospel, performance Christianity, shame-based sanctification, religious works, or legalism?**
- 2. What makes that particular form feel "responsible" or "serious" to you? What are you afraid would happen if you stopped practicing it?**
- 3. Where are you trying to improve the old man instead of living from the new man? What would change if you shifted your focus?**

4. **How does the distinction between "putting to death the old nature" (necromancy) and "putting to death the deeds that contradict your new nature" (walking by the Spirit) change your approach to sin and sanctification?**
5. **What religious works or spiritual disciplines have you been using to try to build your own righteousness instead of living from Christ's righteousness?**
6. **If shame isn't your motivator for change, what is? How does living from your identity in Christ motivate transformation differently than shame does?**
7. **Where are you using rules and external controls to try to manage the flesh instead of walking by the Spirit? What would it look like to shift to Spirit-walking in that area?**
8. **What would it mean practically for you to stop practicing spiritual necromancy today? What's your first step toward leaving the dead man dead?**
9. **If Martin Luther is right that "God does not need your good works, but your neighbor does," how does that change your motivation for obedience and service?**

CHAPTER 12

The Lies We Tell Ourselves

"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." — Ephesians 4:25 (NASB)

We are excellent liars.

Not to others—though we do that too. But to ourselves. We've become masters at telling ourselves lies that sound spiritual, look humble, and feel true.

And the lies we tell ourselves are far more dangerous than the lies we tell others. Because when we believe our own lies, we build our entire lives on false foundations. We make decisions based on fiction. We operate from identities God has already destroyed.

Paul says, "Laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor."

But before you can speak truth to your neighbor, you have to stop lying to yourself. You have to confront the false narratives you've been believing about who you are, what God has done, and how the Christian life actually works.

The lies we tell ourselves are the chains that keep us bound to the old identity. They're the reasons we keep dragging around the dead man. They're the excuses we use to practice spiritual necromancy.

And they all sound so Christian. So biblically informed. So theologically sophisticated.

But they're lies nonetheless. And lies—even well-intentioned, religiously-packaged lies—produce bondage, not freedom.

"You will know the truth," Jesus said, "and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32).

Truth sets free. Lies keep bound.

So it's time to confront the lies we tell ourselves. Time to expose the false narratives. Time to speak truth—to ourselves, about ourselves—even when the truth contradicts what we've believed for years.

Because you can't experience the freedom Christ purchased while believing lies about who you are.

THE LIES THAT KEEP US BOUND

Why do lies have so much power over us?

Because they feel true. They align with our experience. They make sense of our struggles. They give us something to do, something to control, something to fix.

The lies we tell ourselves about our spiritual identity aren't obvious falsehoods. They're subtle distortions. Half-truths. Biblical-sounding statements that are just twisted enough to keep us in bondage.

And here's what makes them so powerful: they're rooted in our experience rather than God's declaration.

We experience struggle with sin. So we conclude: "I must still be controlled by my old nature."

We experience failure. So we conclude: "I must still need to die to myself."

We experience temptation. So we conclude: "I must still be fundamentally a sinner."

We experience the gap between who God says we are and how we're currently living.

So we conclude: "God's declarations about my new identity must not be real yet. They must be something I'm working toward."

But God doesn't base His declarations on our experience. He bases them on Christ's work. And Christ's work is finished, whether our experience reflects it yet or not.

The lies we tell ourselves keep us focused on our experience instead of God's word. On our feelings instead of His facts. On what we perceive instead of what He's declared.

And as long as we believe experience over declaration, we'll stay bound to the old identity.

TRUTH-TELLING AS THE PATHWAY TO FREEDOM

"Laying aside falsehood, speak truth."

Truth-telling isn't just being honest with others. It's being honest with yourself about what God has said.

It's choosing to believe God's word over your experience. It's trusting God's declarations over your feelings. It's accepting God's verdict over your perception.

This is what Romans 6:11 calls "reckoning": "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

"Consider" (Greek: *logizomai*) means to reckon, to account as true, to calculate based on facts rather than feelings.

It's an accounting term. When you balance your books, you don't base the math on how you feel about your finances. You base it on the actual numbers.

Truth-telling is doing the same thing spiritually: You stop basing your identity on how you feel about yourself and start basing it on what God has declared about you in Christ.

The lie says: "I feel like I'm still the old me, so I must be."

The truth says: "God says I'm a new creation, so I am—regardless of how I feel."

The lie says: "I'm still struggling with sin, so my old nature must be alive."

The truth says: "I'm a new creation with a new nature. This struggle is between truth and old patterns, not between two natures."

The lie says: "I don't feel righteous, so I must not be."

The truth says: "I am the righteousness of God in Christ, whether I feel it or not."

Truth-telling is agreeing with God instead of arguing with Him. It's believing His word even when your experience contradicts it. It's speaking truth to yourself until your experience catches up with reality.

And this is the pathway to freedom. Not because you're creating truth by speaking it. But because you're aligning yourself with the truth that already is—and truth sets free.

WE MUST BE HONEST ABOUT WHAT GOD HAS SAID VS. WHAT WE'RE EXPERIENCING

Here's the tension we all live in: what God has said about us and what we're currently experiencing often don't match.

God says you're holy. You experience ongoing sin. God says you're righteous. You experience failure. God says you're free. You experience bondage to old patterns. God says you're new. You experience old temptations.

And when there's a gap between declaration and experience, we have two options:

Option 1: Believe our experience and reinterpret God's declarations.

"God says I'm holy, but I'm clearly not yet, so that must be positional truth that will become experiential truth someday if I work hard enough."

"God says I'm new, but I still act like the old me sometimes, so I must not be fully new yet. Maybe I'm in process of becoming new."

This option keeps you bound. Because you've just made your identity dependent on your experience instead of God's declaration. And your experience fluctuates. So your identity becomes uncertain, conditional, performance-based.

Option 2: Believe God's declarations and let them interpret your experience.

"God says I'm holy. My sin is not evidence that I'm unholy—it's evidence that I'm living inconsistently with who I am. I'm a holy person acting unholy, not an unholy person trying to become holy."

"God says I'm new. My old patterns are not evidence that I'm still old—they're evidence that I haven't fully embraced my newness yet. I'm a new creation still learning to live from that newness."

This option sets you free. Because your identity is anchored in God's unchanging word, not your changing experience.

We must be brutally honest about both:

- What God has said (the truth of our identity in Christ)
- What we're experiencing (the gap between truth and current behavior)

But we must let God's declarations interpret our experience, not let our experience reinterpret God's declarations.

The lies we tell ourselves happen when we reverse that order—when we make experience the authority and reinterpret God's word to fit our experience.

LIE #1: "I NEED TO DIE TO SELF"

The Lie: "I need to die to self. Every day, I need to crucify myself. I need to take up my cross daily and die to my own desires, will, and agenda."

Why It Sounds True: Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). Paul said, "I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31). So clearly we need to die to self daily, right?

The Truth: You already died. Once. Completely. Finally. At the cross.

"I have been crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20)—past tense, done, finished.

"You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3)—past tense, accomplished fact.

"For you have died to the Law through the body of Christ" (Romans 7:4)—past tense, completed.

You're not trying to die. You're learning to reckon the death that already happened.

The Correction: When Jesus said "take up your cross daily," He wasn't saying "crucify yourself daily." He was saying "daily identify with My crucifixion. Daily reckon your death with Me. Daily live from the reality that you've already been crucified."

When Paul said "I die daily," he was talking about facing physical danger daily for the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:30-32), not about crucifying himself spiritually every morning.

The Christian life isn't about achieving your death daily. It's about acknowledging your death once-for-all and living from resurrection daily.

Why This Lie Keeps You Bound: It makes you responsible for achieving what God has already accomplished. It turns crucifixion into a daily work instead of a finished reality. It keeps you focused on dying instead of living. And it resurrects the old man every morning so you can kill him again—which is spiritual necromancy.

The Freeing Truth: You died. Once. With Christ. Now reckon it true and live from resurrection life.

LIE #2: "I'M JUST A SINNER SAVED BY GRACE"

The Lie: "I'm just a sinner saved by grace. I'm broken, messed up, fundamentally flawed. Yes, I'm forgiven, but I'm still essentially a sinner."

Why It Sounds True: You still sin. You still fail. You still struggle with the same patterns. So you must still be a sinner at your core, right?

The Truth: You were a sinner. Now you're a saint who sometimes sins.

"To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints" (Romans 1:7)—Paul addresses Christians not as "sinners trying to be saints" but as "saints."

"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21)—you ARE the righteousness of God, not a sinner trying to become righteous.

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17)—new, not still fundamentally the same old sinner.

The Correction: Yes, you still sin. But sin is what you do, not who you are. Your identity is "saint"—a holy one, set apart, belonging to God. When you sin, you're acting contrary to your identity, not expressing your identity.

A dog that barks is being a dog. A dog that meows is acting contrary to its nature.

You're not a sinner who occasionally does righteous things. You're a saint who occasionally sins—and when you do, you're acting contrary to your new nature.

Why This Lie Keeps You Bound: It makes sin your identity instead of righteousness. It keeps you defined by your worst behavior instead of by Christ's best work. It makes you approach God as a sinner seeking mercy instead of as a child approaching Father. It undermines your confidence and keeps you in perpetual shame.

The Freeing Truth: You're a saint. Holy. Righteous in Christ. When you sin, you're not being yourself—you're acting contrary to who you really are. And recognizing that difference is the beginning of transformation.

LIE #3: "I HAVE TO CRUCIFY MY FLESH DAILY"

The Lie: "My flesh is still alive and powerful. I have to crucify it daily. I have to keep putting it to death or it will take over."

Why It Sounds True: You still experience fleshly desires. You still battle with temptation. So the flesh must still be alive and need crucifying, right?

The Truth: Your flesh—your old nature, your sin nature—was crucified with Christ. Once. Completely. It's dead.

"Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin" (Romans 6:6)—past tense, done, the old self (including the flesh) was crucified.

"Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24)—past tense, accomplished, done.

The Correction: You're not crucifying the flesh. The flesh was crucified. What you're doing now is refusing to resurrect it.

When you experience fleshly desires, you're not experiencing a living flesh nature. You're experiencing the residue of years of training in the flesh. Old patterns. Learned behaviors. Habits formed when you were operating from the old nature.

The flesh is dead. The patterns remain. Your job is to stop giving life to dead patterns by walking in the Spirit instead.

"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16)—walk by the Spirit, and you WON'T fulfill flesh desires. Not "try to crucify the flesh so you can walk by the Spirit." Walk by the Spirit, and the flesh stays dead.

Why This Lie Keeps You Bound: It makes you resurrect the flesh daily so you can crucify it daily. It keeps you focused on managing death instead of living from life. It makes crucifixion your job instead of Christ's finished work.

The Freeing Truth: The flesh is crucified. Dead. Stop trying to kill it and start walking by the Spirit. The Spirit keeps the flesh dead, not your efforts at daily crucifixion.

LIE #4: "MY OLD NATURE IS STILL ACTIVE"

The Lie: "I have two natures inside me—the old sin nature and the new righteous nature—and they're at war with each other. My old nature is still active, still pulling me toward sin, still fighting for control."

Why It Sounds True: You experience internal conflict. Desires you don't want. Battles with temptation. So it feels like two natures warring within you.

The Truth: You have one nature: the new nature, Christ's nature, the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3)—the old you died. The old nature is gone. You have Christ's life now.

The internal conflict you experience isn't two natures fighting. It's the truth of who you are (new nature) conflicting with the lies you've believed and the patterns you've formed (flesh patterns).

The Correction: The old nature is dead. What you're experiencing is:

- Truth vs. lies (what God says vs. what you feel)
- New identity vs. old patterns (who you are vs. how you're used to behaving)
- Spirit vs. flesh (God's power in you vs. learned behaviors from the past)

But you don't have two natures. You're not a split personality, half old and half new. You're fully new, still learning to live from that newness.

Why This Lie Keeps You Bound: It gives the old nature ongoing life. It makes you think you're permanently divided, always fighting a civil war within yourself. It suggests the best you can hope for is stalemate—keeping the old nature in check but never being free from it.

The Freeing Truth: You're not two people. You're one new person. The conflict you experience is between who you are and how you're still learning to live. That's not a two-nature problem—that's a renewing-of-the-mind opportunity.

LIE #5: "I NEED TO MAKE MYSELF DEAD TO SIN"

The Lie: "I need to make myself dead to sin. I need to work at being dead to sin. I need to achieve death-to-sin through discipline and effort."

Why It Sounds True: Sin still feels powerful. Temptation still feels real. You still struggle. So you must need to work at being dead to it, right?

The Truth: You ARE dead to sin. Already. Completely. Not "becoming dead" or "working toward deadness."

"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11).

Notice: CONSIDER yourselves dead. Not MAKE yourselves dead. Not WORK AT BEING dead. Consider—reckon, account as true, acknowledge as fact—yourselves dead to sin.

The Correction: You're not making yourself dead to sin. You're reckoning the death that already happened. You're believing what God says is true and living from that reality.

Sin doesn't have dominion over you (Romans 6:14). Not "shouldn't have" or "won't have if you work hard enough." Doesn't have. Present tense. Current reality.

Your job isn't to achieve deadness to sin. Your job is to believe your deadness to sin and live from that position.

Why This Lie Keeps You Bound: It makes your deadness to sin dependent on your effort instead of Christ's work. It turns a finished reality into an ongoing project. It focuses you on achieving what's already been accomplished.

The Freeing Truth: You're dead to sin. Reckon it true. Believe it. Act from it. Not to become dead, but because you already are.

LIE #6: "GOD IS WAITING FOR ME TO GET MY ACT TOGETHER"

The Lie: "God is patient with me, but He's waiting for me to get my act together. He's given me grace, but now I need to clean up my life. He's accepted me, but I need to become more acceptable."

Why It Sounds True: You're still messed up. Still struggling. Still failing. So God must be waiting for you to improve before He fully accepts you, delights in you, uses you, blesses you.

The Truth: God has already accepted you. Fully. Completely. Finally. In Christ.

"To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

Not "which He will bestow when you get your act together." Which He freely bestowed. Past tense. Done. You're accepted in the Beloved, and the Beloved is Christ.

The Correction: God isn't waiting for you to get your act together. He's transforming you from the inside out because you're already His beloved child.

He's not tolerating you until you improve. He delights in you because you're in Christ.

He's not conditionally accepting you based on your behavior. He's unconditionally accepted you based on Christ's work.

Your behavior is changing (or should be) not to earn acceptance but because you're secure in it. Not to become beloved but because you already are.

Why This Lie Keeps You Bound: It makes God's acceptance conditional. It puts you back under performance pressure. It keeps you anxious about your standing. It makes transformation about earning God's favor instead of living from it.

The Freeing Truth: God isn't waiting. He's already accepted you. In Christ. Fully. Now. Today. Right in the middle of your mess. And from that secure acceptance, He's transforming you into the image of His Son—not so you'll be acceptable, but because you already are.

THE PATTERN IN THE LIES

Notice the pattern in all these lies:

They all make YOU responsible for achieving what GOD has already accomplished.

- You need to die (but you already did)
- You're still a sinner (but you're a saint)
- You need to crucify the flesh (but it's already crucified)
- Your old nature is active (but it's dead)
- You need to make yourself dead to sin (but you're already dead to it)
- God is waiting for you to improve (but He's already accepted you)

Every lie shifts the focus from God's finished work to your unfinished effort.

Every lie makes your identity dependent on your performance instead of on Christ's accomplishment.

Every lie resurrects the old man so you can try to improve him, manage him, or kill him again.

And every lie keeps you in bondage to the very thing Christ freed you from.

THE TRUTH THAT SETS FREE

So what's the truth? What do you need to believe instead?

You Are Who God Says You Are

Not who you feel like. Not who you're currently acting like. Not who you used to be.

Who God says you are:

- New creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- Holy (Hebrews 10:10)
- Beloved (Colossians 3:12)
- Child of God (1 John 3:1)
- Saint (Ephesians 1:1)
- Free (Galatians 5:1)
- Complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10)

This is WHO YOU ARE. Not who you're trying to become. Not who you'll be someday if you work hard enough.

Who. You. Are. Now.

Believe it. Even when you don't feel it. Even when your behavior contradicts it. Even when your experience doesn't match it.

You are who God says you are. And God doesn't lie.

It Is Finished

Jesus said it from the cross: "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Your salvation—finished. Your righteousness—finished. Your acceptance—finished. Your old man's death—finished. Your new creation—finished. Your standing before God—finished.

Not "almost finished" or "will be finished when you get your act together" or "progressively finishing as you grow."

Finished. Done. Complete. Accomplished.

Stop trying to finish what Christ already finished. Stop adding your works to His work. Stop improving on His "it is finished."

It. Is. Finished.

Believe it. Rest in it. Live from it.

His Work, Not Yours

Everything that needed to be done for your salvation, justification, sanctification, and glorification—Christ did it.

Your old man's crucifixion—His work. Your new creation—His work. Your righteousness—His work. Your acceptance—His work. Your transformation—His work in you.

"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Not you working for God. God working in you.

Your job isn't to generate transformation. It's to believe God is transforming you and cooperate with what He's doing.

Your job isn't to crucify yourself. It's to reckon the crucifixion that already happened.

Your job isn't to make yourself righteous. It's to live from the righteousness you already have in Christ.

His work. Not yours. And His work is sufficient.

SPEAKING TRUTH TO YOURSELF

"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth."

Practically, what does this look like?

It looks like confronting the lies when they come up and speaking truth instead:

When the lie says: "You need to die to yourself today." **Speak truth:** "I already died with Christ. Today I'm going to reckon that death as true and live from resurrection."

When the lie says: "You're just a sinner who messed up again." **Speak truth:** "I'm a saint who sinned. That behavior contradicts who I am in Christ. I'm not agreeing with it."

When the lie says: "You need to crucify your flesh." **Speak truth:** "My flesh was crucified with Christ. I'm not resurrecting it. I'm walking by the Spirit."

When the lie says: "Your old nature is still controlling you." **Speak truth:** "My old nature is dead. This is an old pattern, not my nature. I have Christ's nature now."

When the lie says: "You need to make yourself dead to this sin." **Speak truth:** "I am dead to sin. I'm reckoning that reality and living from it."

When the lie says: "God is disappointed in you. You need to do better." **Speak truth:** "God delights in me in Christ. I'm already accepted. I'm being transformed from that secure position."

This isn't positive self-talk. This isn't affirmations. This is truth-telling.

You're agreeing with what God has said instead of arguing with Him. You're believing His word over your feelings. You're reckoning as true what He's declared is true.

And truth sets free.

TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE

"There are two kinds of people," C.S. Lewis said. "Those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your way.'"

There are two kinds of people:

Those who believe God's truth about who they are and say, "Thy will be done. You say I'm new—I'll believe it. You say I'm righteous—I'll live from it. You say it's finished—I'll rest in it."

And those who insist on their own version of reality and to whom God says, "All right, have it your way. Keep believing you're still the old man. Keep trying to crucify yourself daily. Keep working to earn what I've already given. Keep dragging around the dead man. Have it your way."

Which kind are you?

Are you believing God's truth and living from it? Or are you insisting on the lies and wondering why you're still in bondage?

"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

The truth is available. It's been declared. It's been accomplished. It's yours in Christ.

The only question is: will you believe it?

Will you stop lying to yourself and start speaking truth?

Will you lay aside the falsehoods that keep you bound and embrace the truth that sets you free?

The truth is this: You're new. You're righteous. You're holy. You're beloved. You're accepted. You're complete. The old has passed away. The new has come. It is finished.

Stop arguing with God about it.

Believe it. Speak it. Live from it.

And watch the lies lose their power as truth sets you free.

Application Questions

1. **Which of the six lies do you tell yourself most often? How has that lie kept you in bondage to the old identity?**
2. **What would it look like to "speak truth" to yourself about that lie? What is God's declaration that contradicts the lie you believe?**
3. **Where are you basing your identity on your experience instead of on God's declarations? How would shifting that foundation change your daily life?**

4. **If you really believed "it is finished," what would you stop trying to do? What would you start resting in?**
5. **How does the distinction between "sinner saved by grace" and "saint who sometimes sins" change how you view yourself? How you approach God? How you respond to failure?**
6. **What lies have you been telling yourself about God's acceptance of you? What truth do you need to believe instead?**
7. **If you are who God says you are (not who you feel like or who you're currently acting like), how should that change how you live today?**
8. **What's the first lie you need to confront today? What truth will you speak to yourself instead? How will you "reckon" God's truth as real even when your experience doesn't match it yet?**
9. **Are you one of the people who says to God "Thy will be done" about your identity, or are you insisting on your own version and God is saying "have it your way"? What needs to change?**

PART FOUR: LIVING FROM THE NEW CREATION

CHAPTER 13

Reckoning Yourself Dead

"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." — Romans 6:11 (NASB)

Everything comes down to this verse.

All the theology we've covered—co-crucifixion, burial, resurrection, new creation, Christ in you, sonship—all of it is useless if you don't do what this verse says.

"Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Not "make yourselves dead." Not "work at being dead." Not "try to achieve deadness."

Consider. Reckon. Count as true. Account as fact. Calculate based on reality.

This is the hinge between theology and transformation. Between knowing truth and living from it. Between believing you're new and actually experiencing the freedom that newness brings.

You can know everything about co-crucifixion and still live like the old man if you don't reckon it true.

You can understand new creation theology perfectly and still drag around the corpse if you don't consider yourself dead to sin.

You can have all the right doctrine and still be in bondage if you don't actually reckon what God says is true.

Reckoning is where the rubber meets the road. It's where faith becomes functional. It's where declaration becomes experience.

And it's the one thing most Christians never do.

We know the truth. We believe the truth (sort of). We can explain the truth. But we don't reckon the truth. We don't actually count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God.

So we stay stuck. Knowing we're free but living in bondage. Believing we're new but acting like we're old. Confessing we're dead to sin but functioning like we're still enslaved to it.

It's time to stop just knowing and start reckoning.

"CONSIDER" — LOGIZOMAI

The Greek word Paul uses here is *logizomai*. It's an accounting term. A mathematical term. A bookkeeping term.

It means:

- To reckon
- To calculate
- To count as true
- To take into account
- To credit to one's account
- To consider as fact

This is the same word used in Romans 4:3: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."

God reckoned (counted, credited) righteousness to Abraham's account. Abraham didn't generate the righteousness. He believed God, and God credited it to him.

That's reckoning. It's an accounting transaction. It's counting something as true on the books whether you feel it or not.

When you balance your checkbook, you don't base your balance on how wealthy you feel. You base it on what's actually in the account. You reckon—you calculate—based on the numbers, not on your emotions.

That's what Paul is telling you to do spiritually: Reckon yourself dead to sin. Not based on how dead you feel. But based on what God says is true.

Count it. Credit it. Enter it in the books. Acknowledge it as fact.

This is not:

- Positive thinking ("If I think positive thoughts about being dead to sin, maybe I'll become dead to sin")
- Wishful thinking ("I really hope I'm dead to sin")
- Self-help affirmations ("I am dead to sin, I am dead to sin, I am dead to sin...")

- Denial of reality ("I'm not really struggling with sin—that's just an illusion")

This is faith. Biblical, rock-solid, God-centered faith.

Faith is agreeing with what God has said about you, even when your experience hasn't caught up yet.

THIS IS NOT POSITIVE THINKING; IT'S ACKNOWLEDGING REALITY

Let's be clear: reckoning yourself dead to sin is not "name it and claim it" theology. It's not trying to speak something into existence that isn't true.

It's acknowledging what already IS true but hasn't fully manifested in your experience yet.

The difference is crucial:

Positive thinking says: "If I believe hard enough that I'm dead to sin, I can make it true."

Reckoning says: "God says I'm dead to sin through Christ's death. That's objectively true whether I feel it or not. I'm going to count it as true and live accordingly."

Positive thinking says: "I'm creating reality with my thoughts."

Reckoning says: "God has declared reality. I'm aligning my thinking with His declaration."

Positive thinking says: "I'm making myself dead to sin by believing it."

Reckoning says: "I am dead to sin because of Christ's work. Now I'm going to believe what's already true."

See the difference?

One is trying to create truth through mental effort. The other is acknowledging truth that already exists.

One is works. The other is faith.

One is you trying to make something happen. The other is you believing something has already happened.

Reckoning is not denying your experience. It's not pretending you don't struggle with sin. It's not ignoring reality.

Reckoning is choosing to believe God's declaration of reality over your current perception of reality.

Your perception: "I'm struggling with this sin, so I must not be dead to it."

God's declaration: "You died to sin when you died with Christ. Your struggle is between truth and old patterns, not between you and sin's dominion."

Reckoning is believing God's declaration and living from it, even while your perception is still catching up.

FAITH IS AGREEING WITH WHAT GOD HAS SAID ABOUT YOU

This is what faith is. Real faith. Biblical faith.

Not faith in your ability to make something true. But faith in God's declaration that it already is true.

"Faith is not believing that God can," said Ben Hur, "it is knowing that He will."

But I'd adjust that slightly for our context: Faith is not believing that God might declare you dead to sin someday. Faith is knowing that He already has.

Faith is agreeing with God.

When God says, "Your old self was crucified with Christ," faith says, "I believe that's true."

When God says, "You are dead to sin," faith says, "Then I am dead to sin, whether I feel like it or not."

When God says, "You are alive to God in Christ Jesus," faith says, "Then I am alive to God, and I'll live from that life."

Faith doesn't argue. Faith doesn't negotiate. Faith doesn't say, "Yes, but..."

Faith says, "You said it, God. Therefore it's true. I'm going to count it as true and live accordingly."

This is what Abraham did. God said, "I've made you the father of many nations." Abraham looked at his body—old, impotent, incapable of producing children. He looked at Sarah—barren, past childbearing age.

And the text says, "Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead... yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:19-21).

Abraham acknowledged reality (his body was dead). But he believed God's promise more than he believed his circumstance.

He reckoned God's word as true even when his experience contradicted it.

That's faith. That's reckoning.

And that's what God is calling you to do with your identity in Christ.

Your experience says, "You're still enslaved to sin."

God says, "You're dead to sin."

Faith says, "I believe God. I reckon myself dead to sin. And I'm going to live from that truth."

YOU DON'T MAKE YOURSELF DEAD; YOU ACKNOWLEDGE YOU ARE

This is the most important distinction in this entire book:

You don't reckon yourself dead in order to become dead.

You reckon yourself dead because you already are dead.

Reckoning is not the cause of your death to sin. Christ's death is the cause.

Reckoning is acknowledging the death that already happened and living from it.

Wrong understanding: "If I reckon myself dead to sin hard enough, long enough, consistently enough, I'll become dead to sin."

Right understanding: "I am dead to sin because I died with Christ. Now I'm going to reckon that reality as true and live from it."

Wrong understanding: "Reckoning is how I achieve death to sin."

Right understanding: "Reckoning is how I live from the death to sin I already have."

You're not making yourself dead to sin by believing it. You're acknowledging you're dead to sin because Christ made it so.

This is liberating. Because it means your deadness to sin doesn't depend on the quality of your reckoning. It depends on the quality of Christ's work.

And Christ's work was perfect.

So you're dead to sin. Completely. Finally. Perfectly. Whether you reckon it well or poorly. Whether you believe it fully or struggle to believe it. Whether you live from it consistently or inconsistently.

You're dead to sin because of Christ, not because of your reckoning.

But you won't experience the freedom of that death until you reckon it true.

It's like a prisoner who's been legally released from jail but refuses to leave the cell because he doesn't believe the pardon is real. He's free. The door is open. The sentence is served. But he stays in bondage because he won't reckon his freedom as true.

You are dead to sin. That's objective reality because of Christ's death.

Now reckon it. Believe it. Live from it.

HOW TO RECKON: A THREE-STEP PROCESS

Paul gives us a three-step process for reckoning in Romans 6:6-13:

Step 1: Know the Truth (Romans 6:6)

"Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin."

First, you have to know the truth. You can't reckon what you don't know.

This is why theology matters. This is why understanding co-crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and new creation is essential. You have to know what God has done before you can reckon it as true.

What do you need to know?

- Your old self was crucified with Christ (past tense, done)
- Your body of sin was rendered powerless (done away with)
- You're no longer a slave to sin (present reality)
- You died to sin (Romans 6:2)
- You were buried with Christ (Romans 6:4)
- You were raised to newness of life (Romans 6:4)
- You are alive to God in Christ (Romans 6:11)

Know these truths. Not as theories. Not as nice ideas. As facts. As realities. As the actual state of things.

You are who God says you are. Your old self is dead. You're new. You're free.

Know it. Study it. Meditate on it. Let it sink deep into your mind and heart.

Because you can't reckon what you don't know.

Step 2: Consider It True (Romans 6:11)

"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Now that you know the truth, count it as true. Reckon it. Enter it in the books. Acknowledge it as fact.

This is where most Christians stop. We know the truth (Step 1). But we don't consider it true (Step 2). We keep it in the realm of theory instead of bringing it into the realm of practice.

We say, "Yes, I know theologically that I died with Christ." But we don't actually count ourselves dead to sin in daily life.

Consider means to actively, intentionally, deliberately count something as true and make decisions based on that truth.

Practically, this looks like:

When temptation comes, you say (out loud if necessary): "I am dead to sin. Sin has no dominion over me. I don't have to obey this desire because I'm not enslaved to it anymore."

When shame tries to define you, you say: "That's not who I am. I'm a new creation. The old has passed away. I'm not agreeing with shame's definition of me."

When the old patterns pull at you, you say: "That's the old man's pattern, and the old man is dead. I'm a new creation, and I'm going to live from my new identity."

When condemnation accuses you, you say: "There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. I'm in Christ. Therefore I'm not condemned, no matter what I just did."

This isn't magic words. This is faith expressing itself in words. This is you agreeing with God out loud, countering the lies with truth.

You're reckoning. Counting as true. Considering yourself dead to sin and alive to God.

Step 3: Act Accordingly (Romans 6:12-13)

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Now that you know the truth and you've considered it true, act accordingly.

Don't let sin reign. Not because you're fighting to prevent it from reigning (it doesn't reign anymore—Romans 6:14). But because you're living from the reality that it doesn't reign.

Don't present your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Why not? Because you're dead to sin. And dead people don't serve sin. So don't act like you're still enslaved when you're actually free.

Instead, present yourself to God as one alive from the dead. Because that's what you are. You're not trying to come alive. You're already alive. Now live from it.

This looks like:

- When you've reckoned yourself dead to a particular sin, you actually walk away from it instead of indulging it
- When you've reckoned yourself righteous in Christ, you actually make choices from that righteousness instead of from old shame
- When you've reckoned yourself free, you actually live in freedom instead of voluntarily returning to bondage
- When you've reckoned yourself alive to God, you actually pursue Him, commune with Him, respond to Him as one who's alive

Action flows from reckoning. But it's not white-knuckle obedience. It's living consistently with who you've reckoned yourself to be.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION: WHEN SHAME COMES

Let's get intensely practical. How do you actually reckon yourself dead to sin in daily life?

Here are real scenarios and how reckoning works in each:

When Shame Comes: "That's Not Who I Am Anymore"

The Scenario: You fail. Again. Same sin. Same pattern. Same struggle. And immediately, shame floods in: "See? You're still the same. You haven't changed. You're a failure. You're broken. This is who you really are."

The Old Way (Not Reckoning): You agree with shame. "You're right. I am still the same. I'm still broken. Nothing's really changed. I'm just a sinner."

Then you either:

- Spiral into self-condemnation
- Try harder to do better next time (flesh-effort)
- Give up because "I'll never change anyway"

The New Way (Reckoning): You recognize the shame, acknowledge the failure, but refuse to let it define you.

You say (out loud): "That's not who I am anymore. I am a new creation in Christ. The old has passed away. That behavior was inconsistent with my identity. I'm not agreeing with shame's definition of me. I am who God says I am: righteous, holy, beloved, free."

Then you:

- Confess the sin (acknowledge the behavior)
- Receive forgiveness (already given, now received)
- Reckon your identity (dead to sin, alive to God)
- Return to living from your new nature

Why This Works: Because you're separating behavior from identity. You're acknowledging that you sinned (behavior) without agreeing that you're still a sinner (identity).

You're not denying the failure. You're refusing to let the failure redefine you as the old man.

You're reckoning: "I'm dead to sin's dominion. This sin doesn't prove I'm still enslaved. It proves I acted contrary to my freedom. I'm going to live from my freedom instead."

When Condemnation Speaks: "There Is No Condemnation for Those in Christ"

The Scenario: You failed. And now you feel condemned. Distant from God. Disqualified. Like God is disappointed, angry, or has withdrawn His presence because of what you did.

The Old Way (Not Reckoning): You believe the condemnation. You feel like you need to earn your way back into God's good graces. You perform. You promise to do better. You try to prove yourself worthy again.

The New Way (Reckoning): You quote Romans 8:1 out loud: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Then you say: "I am in Christ Jesus. Therefore there is no condemnation for me. None. Not some. Not conditional. No condemnation. My standing with God is based on Christ's work, not mine. God is not condemning me. This feeling of condemnation is a lie. I reject it."

Then you:

- Come boldly to God (not cowering)
- Confess your sin (agree with God about it)
- Receive forgiveness (already given at the cross)
- Rest in your acceptance (unchanged by your failure)

Why This Works: Because you're reckoning God's declaration over your feeling. You're believing what God says (no condemnation) instead of what shame says (you're condemned).

You're not denying that you sinned. You're refusing to believe that sin changes your standing in Christ.

You're reckoning: "I'm alive to God in Christ Jesus. God's not withdrawing from me. I'm not disqualified. I'm His beloved child, and His love doesn't fluctuate based on my performance."

When Performance Pressure Rises: "It Is Finished"

The Scenario: You feel pressure to prove yourself. To earn God's favor. To measure up. To be good enough. The pressure might come from comparing yourself to other Christians, from religious expectations, or from your own internal standards.

The Old Way (Not Reckoning): You accept the pressure and try to perform. "I need to pray more, read more, serve more, be more disciplined, try harder, do better."

You exhaust yourself trying to achieve what you think will finally make you acceptable, valuable, or worthy.

The New Way (Reckoning): You quote Jesus' words from the cross: "It is finished."

Then you say: "My salvation is finished. My righteousness is finished. My acceptance is finished. There is nothing left for me to do to earn what Christ has already accomplished. I don't need to prove myself. I don't need to earn God's favor. I already have it in Christ. It is finished."

Then you:

- Rest in finished work
- Serve from gratitude, not obligation
- Obey from love, not pressure
- Grow from security, not anxiety

Why This Works: Because you're reckoning Christ's finished work as sufficient. You're refusing to add your performance to His accomplishment.

You're not becoming passive or lazy. You're becoming restful and responsive—serving from fullness instead of from lack.

You're reckoning: "I don't have to earn what's already mine. I'm accepted, loved, delighted in. Now I get to respond to that amazing grace instead of trying to achieve it."

RECKONING IS DAILY, BUT DEATH WAS ONCE

Here's an important clarification: You died once. But you reckon daily.

Your death with Christ: Once. Finished. Complete. Unrepeatable. You don't need to die again.

Your reckoning of that death: Daily. Continuous. Repeated. Every time the lies come, you reckon truth.

Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

Daily. Not "die daily" but "take up your cross daily"—daily identify with the death that already happened. Daily reckon it true. Daily live from it.

Why daily? Because the lies come daily. The old patterns pull daily. The temptations attack daily. So you need to reckon truth daily.

Not to achieve death (that's done). But to live from death. To acknowledge what's true. To align your thinking with reality.

Morning reckoning: "God, I died with Christ. I'm no longer the old man. I'm new. I'm alive to You. I'm free from sin's dominion. I'm going to live from that reality today."

Moment-by-moment reckoning: When temptation hits: "I'm dead to this. I don't have to obey." When shame attacks: "That's not who I am anymore." When lies come: "God says I'm righteous, holy, loved. I believe Him."

Evening reckoning: "God, thank You that my failures today didn't change my identity. I'm still new. Still Yours. Still accepted. I'll live from that truth again tomorrow."

Daily reckoning. Not because you need to achieve death daily. But because you need to remember and live from the death that already happened.

THE GAP BETWEEN TRUTH AND EXPERIENCE

Here's the hardest part: There's often a gap between what's true and what you're experiencing.

Truth: You're dead to sin. Experience: You still sin.

Truth: You're righteous in Christ. Experience: You still fail morally.

Truth: Sin has no dominion over you. Experience: You still struggle with the same patterns.

What do you do with that gap?

Don't let experience reinterpret truth. Don't say, "I still struggle, therefore I must not really be dead to sin." That's letting experience define reality.

Let truth interpret experience. Say, "I am dead to sin. This struggle is between truth and old patterns, not between me and sin's dominion. I'm a righteous person learning to live righteously."

The gap is real. Don't deny it. But don't let it redefine you either.

The gap exists because:

- Your mind is being renewed (it's not fully renewed yet)
- Old patterns are being unlearned (they're not fully gone yet)
- You're being transformed (you're not fully transformed yet in experience)

But your identity is settled. Your position is secure. Your nature is new.

The gap is between settled identity and developing experience. Between who you are and how you're living. Between complete truth and incomplete manifestation.

Reckoning is choosing to believe and live from identity even while experience is catching up.

RECKONING IS WARFARE

Make no mistake: reckoning is warfare.

When you reckon yourself dead to sin, you're going to war against lies. Against accusation. Against old patterns. Against spiritual enemies who want you bound to the dead man.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Reckoning is taking thoughts captive. It's destroying speculations—lies, false narratives, deceptive thoughts—that contradict what God says.

The lie says: "You're still enslaved." **You reckon:** "I'm dead to sin. Free. No longer a slave."

The lie says: "You're worthless." **You reckon:** "I'm beloved. Accepted in Christ. Precious to God."

The lie says: "You haven't really changed." **You reckon:** "I'm a new creation. The old passed away. New has come."

This is warfare. It's exhausting sometimes. Because the lies are relentless, and reckoning requires vigilance.

But it's not the same exhaustion as the old man's striving. This is the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). Fighting to believe what's true instead of fighting to make yourself acceptable.

And here's the good news: the more you reckon, the more natural it becomes. The more you take thoughts captive, the weaker the lies become. The more you live from truth, the more your experience aligns with reality.

Reckoning gets easier. Not because death to sin becomes truer (it's always completely true). But because you get better at believing it and living from it.

WHEN RECKONING FEELS FAKE

Sometimes reckoning feels fake. You're saying "I'm dead to sin" while feeling very much alive to it. You're declaring "I'm righteous" while feeling utterly unrighteous.

And part of you thinks, "This is just lying to myself. I'm pretending. I'm in denial."

No. You're not.

You're lying to yourself when you agree with your feelings instead of God's facts.

When you say, "I feel like a sinner, so I must be a sinner"—that's the lie.

When you say, "God says I'm righteous in Christ, therefore I am, regardless of how I feel"—that's truth.

Feelings are not facts. Experience is not the final authority. God's word is.

And sometimes you have to reckon truth while feeling like it's not true. That's not being fake. That's being faithful.

Abraham didn't feel like the father of many nations when he was childless and impotent.

But he believed God's promise anyway. And God credited it to him as righteousness (Romans 4:3).

You don't feel dead to sin. You feel very much tempted, very much struggling, very much aware of sin's pull.

But God says you're dead to sin. And faith believes God over feelings.

So you reckon. Even when it feels fake. Even when your emotions scream otherwise. Even when your experience contradicts it.

You reckon because God said it, and God doesn't lie.

And eventually—not always immediately, but eventually—your feelings catch up. Your experience aligns. The truth you've been reckoning becomes the reality you're experiencing.

But you have to reckon first. Before you feel it. Before you see it. Before you experience it.

That's faith. And that's reckoning.

RECKON, THEN LIVE

Here's the pattern:

Reckon who you are. Then live from who you are.

Not: Live better so you can become who you want to be.

But: Reckon who you are in Christ, then live from that identity.

Reckon: "I'm dead to sin." **Then live from it:** Don't let sin reign. Present yourself to God as alive from the dead.

Reckon: "I'm righteous in Christ." **Then live from it:** Make righteous choices from your righteous identity.

Reckon: "I'm free from sin's dominion." **Then live from it:** Walk in freedom instead of voluntarily returning to bondage.

Reckon: "Christ lives in me." **Then live from it:** Trust His life in you to do what your effort never could.

Reckon first. Then live.

Not the other way around.

THE SIMPLICITY OF RECKONING

At the end of the day, reckoning is simple (though not always easy):

Believe what God says about you more than what you feel about yourself.

Count as true what God has declared true.

Live from that truth even when your experience hasn't caught up yet.

That's it. That's reckoning.

You don't make yourself dead to sin. You acknowledge you already are.

You don't create righteousness. You count Christ's righteousness as yours.

You don't produce freedom. You live from the freedom you've already been given.

Consider yourself dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Reckon it. Believe it. Live from it.

And watch as the truth you've been reckoning becomes the freedom you're experiencing.

Application Questions

1. **What's the difference between reckoning and positive thinking? How does understanding that difference change how you approach reckoning yourself dead to sin?**
2. **Which of the three steps (know, consider, act) is weakest in your life right now? What do you need to do to strengthen it?**
3. **When shame comes, what would it look like to reckon "That's not who I am anymore" instead of agreeing with shame's definition of you?**
4. **Where is there a gap between God's truth about you and your current experience? How can you let truth interpret experience instead of letting experience redefine truth?**
5. **What lies are you most tempted to believe about yourself? What truth do you need to reckon in response to each lie?**
6. **If reckoning yourself dead to sin is an act of faith (agreeing with what God says), what's preventing you from reckoning right now?**
7. **What does daily reckoning look like for you practically? What truths do you need to reckon in the morning? When temptation hits? When shame attacks?**
8. **When reckoning feels fake, what will help you remember that you're believing God's facts over your feelings?**
9. **What would change in your life today if you actually reckoned yourself dead to sin and alive to God—and then lived from that reckoning?**

CHAPTER 14

Putting On the New Self

"and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" — Colossians 3:10 (NASB)

You already have new clothes.

Paul says you "have put on the new self"—past tense, done, accomplished. Not "should put on" or "need to put on" or "are trying to put on."

Have put on. Already wearing. Currently dressed in.

The new self isn't something you're working to acquire. It's what you're already clothed in. It's who you already are.

But here's what most of us do: We stand in the closet wearing the new royal robes God has given us, and we frantically search for the old filthy rags we used to wear, trying to put those on instead.

Or we acknowledge we're wearing the new clothes but spend all our time trying to *become* the kind of person who deserves to wear them—not realizing that's backwards. We already ARE the kind of person who wears these clothes. That's why we're wearing them.

God didn't give you new clothes as a goal to work toward. He clothed you in them at salvation. You're already wearing the new self.

Now Paul says: live like it. Embrace it. Express what you're already wearing instead of trying to create what you already have.

"Put on the new self" isn't a command to acquire something you don't have. It's a command to live from what you do have. To wear what you're already wearing. To be who you already are.

This is the difference between transformation and performance. Between living from identity and working toward identity. Between bearing fruit because you're alive and producing fruit to prove you're alive.

You're not putting on the new self to become new. You're putting on the new self because you ARE new.

And that changes everything.

"PUT ON" — CLOTHE YOURSELF WITH REALITY

"Put on" (Greek: *enduo*) means to clothe yourself, to dress in, to wear.

It's the same word used when Paul says, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:14). Or "Put on the full armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11). Or "Put on love" (Colossians 3:14).

It's about clothing yourself. Wearing something. Being dressed in something.

But notice what Paul says: "You have put on the new self." Past tense. Already done.

You're already wearing it. Now Paul says: keep wearing it. Live from it. Don't take it off and try to put on the old rags again.

This is not:

- Creating newness (you're already new)
- Achieving newness (you already have it)
- Becoming new (you already are new)
- Working toward newness (you already possess it)

This is:

- Acknowledging the newness you have
- Embracing the new identity you've been given
- Living from the new self you're already wearing
- Expressing what already exists instead of creating what doesn't

The distinction is crucial:

Wrong understanding: "I need to put on the new self so I can become new."

Right understanding: "I have put on the new self—I AM new—now I need to live from that newness instead of reverting to oldness."

Wrong understanding: "Putting on the new self is how I create my new identity."

Right understanding: "Putting on the new self is how I express the new identity I already have."

You're not putting on clothes to become someone you're not. You're wearing the clothes that reflect who you already are.

A king doesn't wear royal robes to become a king. He wears royal robes because he IS a king. The robes express his identity; they don't create it.

You're already new. Now put on—express, embrace, wear—that newness.

YOU'RE NOT CREATING NEWNESS; YOU'RE EMBRACING WHAT ALREADY IS

This is the fundamental misunderstanding that keeps Christians in bondage:

We think putting on the new self is about creating newness. It's not. It's about embracing newness that already exists.

The old man's approach: "I need to put on patience, kindness, humility, love. If I work really hard at these virtues, maybe I'll become a new person."

The new man's approach: "I am a new person—I have Christ's nature. Now I'm going to put on (express, embrace, live from) the patience, kindness, humility, and love that are already in me because Christ is in me."

Do you see the difference?

One is trying to create what doesn't exist. The other is expressing what does exist.

One is self-effort to become. The other is faith-response to what already is.

One is working FROM self TO newness. The other is living FROM newness already possessed.

"Our task is not to make something happen," Sue Monk Kidd said, "but to uncover what is already happening."

You're not making newness happen. God already made you new. Your task is to uncover that newness—to discover it, embrace it, express it, live from it.

Like an archaeologist uncovering a buried treasure. You're not creating the treasure. You're removing the dirt that's covering it. You're revealing what's already there.

The new self is already there. Christ in you is already there. The divine nature is already there. Righteousness, holiness, love, peace—all already there, in you, because of Christ.

Now uncover it. Embrace it. Put it on. Wear what you're already wearing.

Stop trying to create what God already created. Start expressing what He already gave you.

THE NEW SELF IS "BEING RENEWED"

Notice the tense: "the new self who is being renewed."

Present, continuous tense. Ongoing action. Progressive renewal.

This is crucial: You **ARE** new (past tense, done). And you're **BEING** renewed (present tense, ongoing).

You became new: At salvation. Instantly. Completely. You were made a new creation the moment you were placed in Christ.

You're being renewed: Progressively. Continuously. Increasingly. You're being transformed from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18).

This isn't a contradiction. It's the distinction between:

- **Position** (you are new—completed)
- **Experience** (you're being renewed—ongoing)

Or:

- **Identity** (new creation—instant)
- **Manifestation** (being conformed to Christ's image—progressive)

You ARE new. That's your identity. Your nature. Your reality in Christ. Settled. Complete. Finished.

You're BEING renewed. That's your experience catching up to your identity. Your life increasingly reflecting what's true. Your behavior aligning with your nature. Progressive. Ongoing. Developing.

And here's the key: **The renewal happens FROM your new identity, not FOR your new identity.**

Wrong understanding: "I'm being renewed so I can become a new creation someday."

Right understanding: "I am a new creation, and because I am, I'm being renewed—transformed into the image of Christ."

Wrong understanding: "Renewal is the process of becoming new."

Right understanding: "Renewal is the process of manifesting the newness I already am."

You don't renew yourself TO become new. God renews you FROM the newness you already are.

The renewal isn't creating your newness. It's uncovering it. Expressing it. Bringing it from the inside out.

You're being renewed "to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him."

True knowledge of what? Of who you are. Of whose you are. Of the image you bear. Of the nature you have. Of the Christ who lives in you.

You're being renewed in your understanding of the new creation you already are. And as your understanding grows, your experience aligns. As you know who you are, you live more and more like who you are.

The renewal is FROM new identity, not FOR new identity.

WHAT PUTTING ON LOOKS LIKE

So practically, what does "putting on the new self" actually look like in daily life?

Paul gives us specific examples in Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3. Let's look at them—not as a to-do list to become new, but as expressions of the newness you already are.

Speaking Truth (Ephesians 4:25)

"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."

Old self approach: "I need to stop lying and speak truth to prove I'm a Christian."

New self approach: "I'm a new creation in whom Christ dwells. Christ is truth. Speaking truth is expressing who I am. Lying contradicts my nature."

You don't speak truth to become truthful. You speak truth because you ARE truth-indwelt. You're putting on (expressing) what's already in you.

Compassion, Kindness, Humility (Colossians 3:12)

"So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

Notice: "as those who have been chosen... holy and beloved."

You're not putting on these virtues TO become chosen, holy, and beloved. You're putting them on BECAUSE you are chosen, holy, and beloved.

Old self approach: "If I'm compassionate and kind enough, maybe I'll be acceptable to God."

New self approach: "I'm chosen, holy, beloved. These virtues—compassion, kindness, humility—are expressions of my belovedness. I'm putting on (expressing) what flows from being loved."

Compassion flows from knowing you're loved. When you're secure in God's love for you, you have compassion to spare for others.

Kindness flows from knowing you've received kindness. You extend what you've received.

Humility flows from knowing your identity is in Christ, not in your achievements. You don't need to prove yourself—you're already accepted.

You're not producing these virtues through self-effort. You're expressing them because they flow from your new nature.

Patience, Forgiveness (Colossians 3:13)

"bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."

Notice the basis: "just as the Lord forgave you."

You don't forgive to earn God's forgiveness. You forgive because you've received God's forgiveness.

Old self approach: "I need to be more patient and forgiving to be a better Christian."

New self approach: "I've been forgiven completely. I've been shown infinite patience by God. Now I'm extending to others what I've received. I'm putting on (expressing) the patience and forgiveness I've experienced."

The fruit of the Spirit includes patience (Galatians 5:22). The Spirit lives in you. Therefore patience is in you. You're not creating it—you're expressing it. You're putting on what you already have.

Love (Colossians 3:14)

"Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity."

Love is the ultimate expression of the new self. Why? Because "God is love" (1 John 4:8). And if God lives in you, then love lives in you.

Old self approach: "I need to try really hard to love people to prove I'm a Christian."

New self approach: "God is love, and God lives in me. Therefore love dwells in me. I'm not generating love—I'm expressing the love that's already in me because Christ is in me."

You don't produce love to prove you're alive in Christ. You express love because Christ, who IS love, is your life.

THE KEY DISTINCTION: PRODUCING VS. BEARING

This is where most Christians get confused. We think we're supposed to *produce* fruit. But Scripture says we *bear* fruit.

The difference is everything.

Producing Fruit = Old Man Approach

Producing fruit says:

- "I need to generate this fruit through my effort."
- "If I try hard enough, I can produce patience, kindness, love."
- "My fruit production proves I'm alive in Christ."
- "The more fruit I produce, the more spiritual I am."

This is the old man's approach. Self-effort. Self-generation. Self-production.

And it's exhausting. Because you're trying to create what only God can give. You're trying to produce from death what can only come from life.

Bearing Fruit = New Man Approach

Bearing fruit says:

- "I'm connected to the Vine (Christ). He produces the fruit. I bear it."
- "I abide in Him, and fruit happens naturally, organically."
- "The fruit I bear proves I'm alive in Christ—not because I produced it, but because I'm connected to the Life-source who produces it."
- "The fruit is the result of abiding, not the proof of trying."

This is the new man's approach. Spirit-power. Christ-life. Abiding-fruit.

And it's restful. Because you're not creating the fruit—you're expressing the life that's already in you.

Jesus said it clearly:

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

Notice:

- The branch doesn't produce fruit—it bears it
- The fruit comes from abiding—not from trying
- Apart from the Vine, you can do nothing (including produce fruit)

The branch's job is to abide. Stay connected. Remain in the Vine. Receive the Vine's life.

The Vine's job is to produce fruit. The branch just bears what the Vine produces.

That's you. You're the branch. Christ is the Vine. Your job is to abide. His job is to produce fruit. Your job is to bear what He produces.

You don't produce fruit to prove you're alive. You bear fruit because you ARE alive and connected to the Life-source.

APPLES GROW ON APPLE TREES BECAUSE THEY ARE APPLE TREES

Here's the illustration that makes it clear:

An apple tree doesn't try really hard to produce apples to prove it's an apple tree. It doesn't strive, strain, or effort its way into apple-production to become an apple tree.

An apple tree produces apples because it IS an apple tree. That's its nature. That's what apple trees do.

The apple production isn't the tree trying to become an apple tree. It's the tree being what it already is.

You're an apple tree (new creation). The fruit (love, patience, kindness, etc.) grows on you because that's what new creations produce.

Not because you're trying to prove you're new. But because you ARE new, and newness produces certain fruit naturally.

The old man approach: "If I can just produce enough spiritual fruit, maybe I'll become a new creation."

The new man approach: "I am a new creation. Christ lives in me. Therefore His fruit will be expressed through me as I abide in Him."

The old man approach: "I need to try really hard to be patient to prove I'm changed."

The new man approach: "I have the Spirit in me. The Spirit produces patience. I'm going to abide in the Spirit and let His fruit be expressed through me."

The old man approach: "I'm going to work at loving people to become more Christ-like."

The new man approach: "Christ is in me. He is love. I'm going to live from that love that's already in me, letting it flow through me to others."

Apple trees produce apples because they ARE apple trees.

You produce Christ-like fruit because you ARE a new creation with Christ's life in you.

Not to prove it. Not to achieve it. Not to become it.

But because it's your nature. Because it's who you are. Because Christ is your life.

PUTTING ON IS EXPRESSING, NOT CREATING

Let's bring this home with absolute clarity:

When Paul says "put on the new self" and then lists virtues like compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, love—he's not giving you a self-improvement checklist.

He's not saying, "Work really hard to create these virtues in yourself so you can become new."

He's saying, "You're new. These virtues are expressions of your newness. Put them on (wear them, express them, live from them) because they're consistent with who you are."

Putting on is:

- Expressing what's already in you
- Wearing what you've already been given

- Living from who you already are
- Manifesting the Christ who already dwells in you

Putting on is NOT:

- Creating what doesn't exist
- Working to acquire what you lack
- Trying to become what you're not
- Producing fruit to prove you're alive

When you put on compassion: You're not creating compassion. You're expressing the compassion that flows from knowing you're loved.

When you put on kindness: You're not generating kindness. You're extending to others the kindness you've received from God.

When you put on humility: You're not manufacturing humility. You're living from the security of knowing your worth is in Christ, not in your achievements.

When you put on patience: You're not producing patience through gritted teeth. You're expressing the patience of the Spirit who lives in you.

When you put on love: You're not working up love through willpower. You're letting the love of Christ that dwells in you flow through you to others.

This is putting on the new self: expressing what already IS instead of creating what ISN'T.

FROM IDENTITY, NOT FOR IDENTITY

Here's the pattern that runs through everything:

Transformation flows FROM identity, not FOR identity.

Wrong: Try to be compassionate so you can become Christ-like. **Right:** You're in Christ. Now express the compassion that flows from being loved.

Wrong: Work at being patient so you can prove you're spiritual. **Right:** The Spirit lives in you. Express the patience He produces.

Wrong: Force yourself to love so you can earn God's approval. **Right:** God loves you fully. Extend His love to others from that secure position.

Wrong: Produce fruit to prove you're alive. **Right:** Bear fruit because you ARE alive.

Wrong: Put on the new self to become new. **Right:** You ARE new. Put on (express) that newness.

FROM identity, not FOR identity.

You're not becoming new through putting on these virtues. You're expressing newness that already exists.

You're not working FOR new creation status. You're living FROM new creation reality.

This flips the entire Christian life on its head—or rather, puts it right-side up.

You're not climbing a ladder trying to reach God's approval. You're already at the top—accepted in Christ—and now you're living from that secure position.

You're not producing fruit to prove you're a fruit-bearing tree. You're a fruit-bearing tree (new creation), and fruit is happening naturally because that's what new creations do.

FROM. Not FOR.

Always FROM. Never FOR.

UNCOVERING WHAT'S ALREADY HAPPENING

"Our task is not to make something happen but to uncover what is already happening."

God is already at work in you. "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Already. Present tense. Currently working.

Your task isn't to make transformation happen. Your task is to cooperate with what's already happening. To uncover it. To let it manifest. To express what God is producing.

God is producing patience in you. Your job: put it on. Express it. Let it show.

God is producing love in you. Your job: wear it. Live from it. Extend it.

God is producing kindness in you. Your job: embrace it. Act from it. Be it.

God is making something happen. You're uncovering it. Revealing it. Expressing it.

Like a sculptor removing marble to reveal the statue that's already there. You're not creating the statue. You're removing what's covering it.

Or like an artist developing a photograph. The image is already on the film. You're not creating the image—you're developing it, bringing it to visibility.

God has already made you new. Christ already dwells in you. The fruit is already being produced by the Vine.

Now uncover it. Develop it. Express it. Put it on.

Stop trying to create what God already created. Start revealing what He's already produced.

PRACTICAL STEPS FOR PUTTING ON

So how do you actually "put on the new self" in daily life?

1. Know Who You Are (Identity-Awareness)

Before you can put on the new self, you have to know you ARE the new self.

Spend time in the Word discovering your identity. Meditate on passages that declare who you are in Christ:

- New creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- Holy (1 Corinthians 1:2)
- Beloved (Colossians 3:12)
- Complete (Colossians 2:10)

Let these truths sink deep. You're not becoming these things. You ARE these things.

2. Believe What's True (Faith-Agreement)

When the old patterns pull at you, remind yourself of truth:

"I'm a new creation with Christ's nature. Patience is in me because the Spirit is in me. I don't have to create patience—I just need to express what's already there."

This is putting on the new self: agreeing with what's true and living from it.

3. Abide in the Vine (Connection-Maintenance)

Jesus said, "Abide in Me" (John 15:4). Your job is to stay connected to the Life-source.

How?

- Prayer (communing with Christ)
- Scripture (hearing His voice)
- Worship (delighting in Him)
- Obedience (responding to Him)

Abiding isn't working to stay connected. It's resting in connection that already exists and nurturing that relationship.

4. Express What's Inside (Identity-Action)

When patience is needed, don't try to manufacture it. Express the patience that's already in you because the Spirit is in you.

When love is required, don't work it up through willpower. Let Christ's love in you flow through you.

When kindness is the right response, express the kindness that flows from knowing you're beloved.

You're not creating these virtues. You're expressing what's already there.

5. Let the Fruit Show (Bearing, Not Producing)

Don't obsess over fruit production. That's the Vine's job, not yours.

Your job is to abide. His job is to produce. Your job is to bear what He produces.

When you're abiding, fruit happens. Naturally. Organically. Inevitably.

Not because you're trying to produce it. But because you're connected to the Life-source who produces it.

WHEN THE OLD PATTERNS PULL

"But what about when I feel the old patterns pulling at me? When I'm tempted to respond in the old ways? When the flesh patterns are strong?"

This is when putting on the new self becomes most practical:

The pull comes: Anger. Impatience. Selfishness. Pride. Whatever your particular struggle.

Old man response: "Here I go again. I'm still the same. I can't help it. This is just who I am."

New man response (putting on): "That's the old pattern. But I'm not the old man anymore. I'm new. That pattern contradicts who I am. I'm going to put on (express) my new identity instead."

Then you:

- Acknowledge the pull (don't deny it)
- Refuse to identify with it ("That's not who I am")
- Reckon your new identity ("I'm patient because the Spirit is in me")
- Act from that identity (respond patiently instead of angrily)

You're putting on the new self. Wearing what you're already wearing. Living from who you already are.

Not perfectly. Not always successfully. But consistently moving in the direction of expressing newness instead of reverting to oldness.

RENEWAL IS PROGRESSIVE, BUT IDENTITY IS INSTANT

Let's address the tension again:

You became new instantly. At salvation. In a moment.

You're being renewed progressively. Daily. Increasingly.

How do these fit together?

Identity (instant): You ARE a new creation. Complete. Finished. Settled.

Experience (progressive): You're BEING renewed—your experience is catching up to your identity. Your life is increasingly manifesting what's already true.

Identity: The oak tree exists fully in the acorn. It IS an oak, even though it doesn't look like one yet.

Experience: The acorn grows into a visible oak tree. The identity manifests over time.

You ARE new. That's instant. Complete. Finished.

You're BEING renewed. That's progressive. Ongoing. Developing.

But the renewal is FROM the newness, not TOWARD it. You're not becoming new—you're manifesting the newness you already are.

And that renewal will continue for the rest of your life. Not because you're still trying to become new. But because the new creation you are is being expressed more and more fully as you live from it.

PUTTING ON IS RESTFUL, NOT STRESSFUL

Here's the good news: putting on the new self is restful, not stressful.

Stressful: Trying to create virtues you don't have through self-effort.

Restful: Expressing virtues you already have because Christ is in you.

Stressful: Producing fruit to prove you're alive.

Restful: Bearing fruit because you ARE alive.

Stressful: Working FOR new identity.

Restful: Living FROM new identity.

When you understand that you're not creating what doesn't exist but expressing what does exist, the pressure's off.

You're not responsible for generating Christ-likeness. Christ is Christ-like, and He's in you. You're responsible for abiding in Him and letting His life be expressed through you.

That's restful. Because the burden shifts from your effort to His life. From your production to His fruit. From your striving to His abiding-presence.

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Rest. Not exhausting effort. Not relentless striving. Rest.

Because He's in you. His life is your life. And you're simply expressing what He's already producing.

That's putting on the new self. And it's restful.

YOU'RE ALREADY WEARING THE NEW CLOTHES

You're already wearing the new self. God clothed you in it at salvation.

Now live like it. Express it. Embrace it. Don't take it off and try to put on the old rags again.

You're not working to acquire new clothes. You're wearing the clothes you've already been given.

You're not becoming new. You're living from the newness you already are.

You're not producing fruit to prove you're alive. You're bearing fruit because you ARE alive—connected to the Vine who produces it.

Put on the new self. Not to become new. But because you are new.

Uncover what's already happening. Don't try to make something happen.

The new self is already there. Christ is already in you. The fruit is already being produced.

Now put it on. Wear it. Express it. Live from it.

You're already new. Live like it.

Application Questions

- 1. What's the difference between putting on the new self to become new versus putting it on because you already are new? How does that distinction change your approach to spiritual growth?**
- 2. Which virtues (compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, love) are you trying to produce through self-effort instead of expressing from Christ's life in you?**
- 3. How does understanding that you're bearing fruit (not producing it) change your relationship with the Vine (Christ)?**
- 4. Where are you trying to create newness instead of uncovering/expressing newness that already exists?**
- 5. If transformation flows FROM identity (not FOR identity), what does that mean for how you approach areas where you're still struggling?**
- 6. What would change today if you really believed you're an apple tree (new creation) that naturally produces fruit, rather than believing you need to work to produce fruit to prove you're an apple tree?**
- 7. When old patterns pull at you, what does it look like practically to "put on the new self" instead of reverting to the old self?**

8. **How does understanding that God is already at work in you (Philippians 2:13) change what you think your job is in transformation?**
9. **What does abiding in the Vine look like for you practically today? How is that different from trying to produce fruit?**
10. **If putting on the new self is restful (not stressful), where are you still experiencing stress in your spiritual life, and what does that reveal about whether you're living FROM identity or working FOR identity?**

CHAPTER 15

Walking in the Spirit vs. Dragging the Flesh

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." — Galatians 5:16 (NASB)

This is a promise, not a command.

Read it again carefully: "Walk by the Spirit, and you **will not** carry out the desire of the flesh."

Not "might not" or "probably won't" or "should avoid if you try hard enough."

Will not. Guaranteed. Promised. Certain.

If you walk by the Spirit, you will not fulfill the flesh's desires. It's not a maybe. It's a divine guarantee.

But here's what most Christians hear instead: "Try really hard not to fulfill the flesh's desires, and maybe if you're disciplined enough, you can walk by the Spirit."

That's backwards. That's dragging the flesh around, trying to control it, manage it, suppress it through your own effort—and then hoping the Spirit will help if you work hard enough.

But Paul says the opposite: Walk by the Spirit, and the flesh problem takes care of itself. You won't carry out its desires. Not because you're managing the flesh so well, but because you're walking by the Spirit.

This is the fundamental choice every Christian faces every moment of every day:

Walk by the Spirit (restful, fruitful, empowered, liberating)

or

Drag the flesh (exhausting, fruitless, self-powered, enslaving)

You can't do both. You're either walking by the Spirit or you're dragging the flesh. You're either living from the new creation or you're trying to resurrect the old one. You're either trusting the Spirit's power or you're relying on self-effort.

And the difference between the two is the difference between freedom and bondage, rest and exhaustion, fruit and futility.

It's time to stop dragging the flesh and start walking by the Spirit.

WALK BY THE SPIRIT

The little word "by" matters enormously here.

In Greek, it's *pneumati* (dative case), which can mean "by," "with," or "in" the Spirit. But the dative case here is instrumental—indicating means or agency.

Walk by means of the Spirit. Through the agency of the Spirit. By the power of the Spirit.

Not "walk and the Spirit will help you." But "walk by the Spirit's power as your means of walking."

The Spirit is not your helper. He's your power source.

Think about it like this:

Wrong understanding: "I'll walk the Christian life, and the Spirit will assist me when I need help."

Right understanding: "The Spirit walks the Christian life through me. I'm yielding to His power, receiving His enabling, cooperating with His work."

Wrong: "I'm driving the car, and the Spirit is my passenger giving directions."

Right: "The Spirit is driving. I'm yielding to His direction, trusting His navigation, going where He leads."

Wrong: "I generate the Christian life with the Spirit's help."

Right: "The Spirit generates the Christian life. I receive it, walk in it, express it."

This is not passivity. You're walking. You're active. You're engaged. But the power source isn't you—it's the Spirit.

You're not walking in your own strength with the Spirit as your assistant. You're walking by the Spirit's strength as your sole means of walking.

And this changes everything.

THE PROMISE: YOU WILL NOT CARRY OUT THE FLESH

Here's the guarantee: "you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

"You will not." Not "you should try not to" or "you probably won't if you're good enough." You **will not**.

This is a promise. A divine certainty. A guaranteed outcome.

IF you walk by the Spirit, THEN you will not carry out the flesh's desires.

Cause and effect. Condition and result. Promise and fulfillment.

But we don't believe this. We think:

- "I need to avoid the flesh's desires so I can walk by the Spirit." (Backwards)
- "If I resist the flesh hard enough, maybe the Spirit will help me." (Backwards)
- "Walking by the Spirit means trying really hard not to sin." (Wrong)

But Paul says it's much simpler: Walk by the Spirit, and the flesh problem is solved. Not because you're managing the flesh. But because you're empowered by the Spirit, and the Spirit's power is greater than the flesh's pull.

Why don't we fulfill the flesh's desires when we walk by the Spirit?

Not because we're white-knuckling our way to victory. Not because we're suppressing desires through sheer willpower. Not because we're controlling the flesh through discipline.

But because:

1. **The flesh is already dead.** We're not giving life to what God killed.
2. **The Spirit is infinitely more powerful.** When you're empowered by Him, the flesh has no dominion.
3. **You're walking in a different direction.** The flesh pulls one way; the Spirit leads another. When you're walking by the Spirit, you're simply not going where the flesh wants to go.
4. **You're satisfied by something better.** When you're experiencing the Spirit's life, the flesh's counterfeit desires lose their appeal.

This is not about resisting temptation through self-effort. This is about walking in the Spirit's power, and in that power, the flesh's desires aren't fulfilled.

Not because you're fighting them. But because you're walking by something greater.

THE FLESH DOESN'T NEED TO BE CRUCIFIED AGAIN; STOP ENERGIZING IT

Here's what Paul is **not** saying: "Crucify your flesh daily, and if you do that well enough, you'll be able to walk by the Spirit."

Here's what Paul **is** saying: "Your flesh was crucified with Christ. Now walk by the Spirit instead of trying to resurrect and manage what's already dead."

The flesh doesn't need to be crucified again. It's already crucified (Galatians 5:24).

The flesh doesn't need to be killed. It's already dead.

The flesh doesn't need your energy trying to suppress it. It needs you to stop energizing it by giving it attention, power, and life.

Think about it: How do you keep a fire burning? You feed it. Add fuel. Give it oxygen.

How do you put out a fire? Stop feeding it. Remove the fuel. Cut off the oxygen.

The flesh is like that fire. It's already been doused. It's already been put out at the cross. But we keep adding fuel.

We energize the flesh when we:

- Focus all our attention on it ("Don't think about pink elephants")
- Try to manage it through self-effort (giving it power by making it our primary concern)
- Attempt to crucify it daily (resurrecting it so we can kill it again)
- Make it the center of our Christian life (instead of making Christ the center)

We stop energizing the flesh when we:

- Walk by the Spirit (focusing on Him, not on managing the flesh)
- Live from our new identity (not trying to fix the old identity)
- Abide in Christ (drawing life from Him, not fighting death in ourselves)
- Reckon the flesh dead and refuse to resurrect it

The flesh is already crucified. Your job is not to crucify it again. Your job is to stop giving it CPR and start walking by the Spirit.

THE TWO WAYS

Paul presents us with a stark choice: two completely different ways of living the Christian life.

Way #1: Dragging the Flesh (Exhausting, Fruitless)

This is what most Christians do. We drag around the dead man, trying to control him, manage him, keep him in line.

What it looks like:

- Constant focus on the flesh: "I need to manage my anger. Control my lust. Suppress my pride. Keep my tongue in check."
- Self-effort as primary strategy: "If I just try harder, pray more, discipline myself better, I can keep the flesh under control."
- White-knuckle obedience: "I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to do that." (And eventually you do, because willpower runs out.)
- Measuring success by behavior management: "I didn't sin today" (which usually means "I didn't commit the big obvious sins, though I was full of pride, self-righteousness, and judgment all day").

Why it's exhausting:

- You're fighting a war that's already been won
- You're trying to kill what's already dead
- You're managing death instead of living from life
- You're using your power instead of the Spirit's power
- You're focused on what you're avoiding instead of Whom you're pursuing

Why it's fruitless:

- Self-effort produces works of the flesh, not fruit of the Spirit
- Managing sin doesn't produce righteousness
- Suppressing bad doesn't create good
- Controlling the flesh doesn't release the Spirit's power
- You can manage behavior without transformation of heart

The outcome: You're exhausted, frustrated, and secretly wondering why the "abundant life" Jesus promised feels so... burdensome. You're managing to avoid some obvious sins (maybe), but you're not experiencing joy, peace, freedom, or transformation.

You're dragging the corpse. And it's killing you.

Way #2: Walking by the Spirit (Restful, Fruitful)

This is what Paul describes. This is the new way. This is living from new creation, not dragging around the old.

What it looks like:

- Primary focus on the Spirit: "I'm going to abide in Christ today. Walk with Him. Listen to Him. Respond to Him. Receive from Him."
- Spirit-dependence as primary strategy: "I can't live this life. But Christ in me can. I'm going to yield to Him, trust Him, let Him live through me."
- Responsive obedience: Not fighting against sin through willpower, but responding to the Spirit's leading, which naturally moves you away from sin.
- Measuring success by abiding: "Did I walk with the Spirit today? Did I yield to Him? Did I respond when He prompted me?"

Why it's restful:

- You're not fighting to achieve what's already accomplished
- You're trusting the Spirit's power instead of relying on your own
- You're focusing on Life (Christ) instead of on death (managing flesh)
- You're receiving instead of generating
- You're walking toward Someone instead of running from something

Why it's fruitful:

- The Spirit produces His fruit in you as you abide in Him
- Transformation happens from the inside out
- The focus on Christ naturally displaces focus on sin
- The Spirit's power is greater than the flesh's pull
- Real change happens at the heart level, not just behavior level

The outcome: You experience freedom. Rest. Joy. Peace. And, surprisingly, you find yourself sinning less—not because you're managing it better, but because you're walking in the Spirit and the flesh's desires simply aren't being fulfilled.

You're walking freely. And it's giving you life.

FLESH VS. SPIRIT: TWO COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SYSTEMS

Let's be clear about the fundamental difference:

Flesh = Self-Effort, Works, Performance

The flesh says:

- "I can do this."
- "I just need to try harder."
- "If I'm disciplined enough, I can control myself."
- "My obedience earns God's favor."
- "I'm responsible for producing righteousness."

The flesh operates through:

- **Self-effort:** "It's up to me to generate the Christian life."
- **Works:** "I earn my standing through what I do."
- **Performance:** "God accepts me based on how well I perform."
- **Control:** "I need to manage, suppress, control the bad in me."
- **Achievement:** "I'm working toward becoming acceptable."

The flesh's goal: Make the old man behave well enough to be acceptable.

The problem: The old man is dead. You can't improve a corpse.

Spirit = Yielding, Receiving, Abiding

The Spirit says:

- "Christ can do this through you."
- "You need to yield, not try."
- "As you abide in Me, I produce what you can't."
- "You obey from love, not for acceptance."
- "I'm producing righteousness in you."

The Spirit operates through:

- **Yielding:** "I surrender to the Spirit's work in me."
- **Receiving:** "I receive from Christ what I can't generate."
- **Abiding:** "I stay connected to the Life-source."
- **Trust:** "The Spirit is transforming me from within."
- **Rest:** "I'm already accepted; now I'm being transformed from that secure position."

The Spirit's goal: Express Christ's life through the new creation you already are.

The reality: You're new. The Spirit lives in you. You're abiding in the power that raised Christ from the dead.

THE FRUIT TEST

Here's how you know whether you're walking by the Spirit or dragging the flesh: Look at the fruit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Notice: This is **fruit** of the Spirit, not **works** of the flesh.

Fruit happens naturally. It grows. It develops. It's produced by the life of the tree, not by the effort of the branch.

Works are manufactured. Produced through effort. Generated by trying.

Internal Fruit: Love, Joy, Peace

Love — Not forced affection but genuine care that flows from being loved by God.

Joy — Not manufactured happiness but deep gladness rooted in secure identity.

Peace — Not absence of problems but internal rest that comes from trusting God.

The flesh can't produce these. You can fake them. You can pretend. You can perform them externally. But you can't generate genuine love, joy, and peace through self-effort.

The Spirit produces these naturally as you abide in Christ. You don't work them up. You experience them as the fruit of His life in you.

Test: Do you have genuine love, joy, and peace? Or are you exhausted from trying to manufacture them?

Relational Fruit: Patience, Kindness, Goodness

Patience — Not gritting your teeth and forcing yourself to wait, but genuine long-suffering that flows from experiencing God's patience with you.

Kindness — Not performing nice acts to look Christian, but genuine compassion flowing from the kindness God has shown you.

Goodness — Not moral superiority or self-righteousness, but authentic integrity flowing from the Good One who lives in you.

The flesh can fake these. You can be outwardly patient while inwardly seething. You can perform kind acts while harboring bitterness. You can appear good while being full of pride.

The Spirit produces these from the inside out. Real patience. Genuine kindness. Authentic goodness. Not performed, but produced.

Test: Are your relational virtues genuine? Or are you performing on the outside while struggling on the inside?

Behavioral Fruit: Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control

Faithfulness — Not forced loyalty through obligation, but genuine reliability flowing from the Faithful One in you.

Gentleness — Not weakness or passivity, but genuine strength under control, flowing from knowing your strength is in Christ, not in dominating others.

Self-control — Not white-knuckle suppression of desires, but genuine mastery that flows from the Spirit's control in you.

The flesh tries to produce these through discipline. "I will be faithful. I will be gentle. I will control myself." And it works... until it doesn't. Until you're exhausted. Until willpower fails.

The Spirit produces these as you yield to Him. You're not forcing self-control. You're experiencing Spirit-control, which manifests as genuine self-control.

Test: Is your self-control brittle (ready to snap under pressure)? Or is it the Spirit's fruit (sustainable, genuine, internal)?

THESE ARE FRUIT, NOT WORKS

This distinction is crucial:

FRUIT of the Spirit:

- Grows naturally from the Life-source
- Happens as a result of abiding, not trying
- Is produced by the Spirit, not generated by you
- Develops over time as you remain connected
- Can't be manufactured through effort

WORKS of the flesh:

- Manufactured through self-effort
- Achieved through trying, striving, performing
- Generated by you, not produced by the Spirit
- Exhausting to maintain
- Brittle, fragile, unsustainable

You can't produce fruit through works. You can fake it. You can perform it externally. But you can't generate the Spirit's fruit through flesh-effort.

An apple tree doesn't "work" to produce apples. It simply bears the fruit that naturally grows from being an apple tree.

You don't "work" to produce love, joy, peace, patience, etc. You bear the fruit that naturally grows from abiding in Christ.

The flesh says: "I need to work on being more patient. I need to try harder to love people. I need to force myself to have joy."

The Spirit says: "Abide in Me. Walk with Me. Receive My life. And the fruit will happen naturally."

The flesh approach produces temporary behavior changes that don't last. Eventually, you run out of energy, willpower fails, and you're back where you started.

The Spirit approach produces genuine transformation from the inside out. Not overnight, but progressively, sustainably, genuinely.

Fruit happens. Works are forced.

Walk by the Spirit. Fruit will follow.

PRACTICAL DIFFERENCE IN DAILY LIFE

Let's get intensely practical. What does it actually look like to walk by the Spirit instead of dragging the flesh?

When Temptation Comes

Dragging the flesh: "Don't do it. Don't do it. Don't do it. Resist. Fight. Control yourself. Try harder. Be strong. Don't give in."

Result: Eventually you're exhausted and you give in. Or you resist this time, but you're drained and vulnerable for next time.

Walking by the Spirit: "Spirit, I'm tempted. This desire is pulling at me. But You are greater. I'm yielding to You. Lead me. Empower me. Show me the truth behind this lie. Satisfy me with something better."

Result: You're not fighting in your own strength. You're receiving the Spirit's power. And the promise holds: you will not fulfill the flesh's desire because you're walking by the Spirit.

When You're Angry

Dragging the flesh: "Don't be angry. Don't be angry. Calm down. Control yourself. You're a Christian—act like it. Suppress this. Push it down."

Result: You're angry on the inside, performing calm on the outside. Or you explode and then feel guilty.

Walking by the Spirit: "Spirit, I'm angry. Show me what's behind this. Is this righteous anger or is this my pride/control/fear? I yield to You. Produce Your patience in me. Give me Your perspective."

Result: You're processing the anger honestly with God instead of suppressing it. The Spirit produces genuine patience and peace, not forced calm.

When You're Anxious

Dragging the flesh: "Don't worry. Don't worry. You shouldn't be anxious. Christians aren't supposed to be anxious. Stop it. Control your thoughts. Think positive."

Result: You're anxious about being anxious. You're trying to force peace through mental effort. It doesn't work.

Walking by the Spirit: "Spirit, I'm anxious about this situation. I'm bringing it to You. You say You're my peace. I receive Your peace. I trust You with this. I'm resting in You, not in my ability to control outcomes."

Result: You're honest about the anxiety, but you're receiving the Spirit's peace instead of manufacturing your own. And "the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension" (Philippians 4:7) actually comes.

When You Need to Love Someone Difficult

Dragging the flesh: "I need to love this person. I'm supposed to love them. I'm going to force myself to be nice. I'll perform love even though I don't feel it."

Result: Fake love. Performed kindness. Inauthentic relationship. And exhaustion from pretending.

Walking by the Spirit: "Spirit, I don't have natural love for this person. But You do. You love them infinitely. I yield to You. Love them through me. Give me Your heart for them."

Result: Genuine love. Not forced or manufactured, but the Spirit's love flowing through you to them. Authentic. Sustainable.

Do you see the difference?

Dragging the flesh is about self-effort, control, suppression, performance.

Walking by the Spirit is about yielding, receiving, trusting, abiding.

One is exhausting and fruitless. The other is restful and fruitful.

"THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE IS NOT A SPECIAL, DELUXE EDITION"

A.W. Tozer said, "The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people."

This isn't advanced Christianity. This isn't for super-spiritual elite believers. This isn't optional.

Walking by the Spirit is normal Christianity. It's how you're supposed to live. It's the plan. It's the design.

Dragging the flesh is abnormal Christianity. It's living below your inheritance. It's rejecting the power you've been given. It's trying to live the Christian life with the old man's methods.

Every Christian has the Spirit. "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Romans 8:9). You're not waiting to receive the Spirit. You have the Spirit.

The question is: Are you walking by the Spirit? Or are you dragging the flesh?

Are you living from the new creation's power? Or are you trying to rehabilitate the old creation's performance?

Are you receiving the Spirit's fruit? Or are you manufacturing the flesh's works?

This isn't deluxe Christianity. This is Christianity. Period.

You have the Spirit. Now walk by Him.

STOP DRAGGING, START WALKING

Here's the call: Stop dragging the flesh. Start walking by the Spirit.

Stop trying to manage what's already dead. Start receiving from Who's alive.

Stop focusing on the flesh (what to avoid, what to control, what to suppress). Start focusing on the Spirit (Whom to follow, Whom to trust, Whom to abide in).

Stop trying to produce fruit through works. Start bearing fruit as you walk by the Spirit.

The flesh is dead. It was crucified with Christ. It doesn't need your energy trying to resurrect it and manage it.

The Spirit is alive. He dwells in you. He's ready to empower, lead, transform, and produce His fruit in you.

The choice is simple:

Drag the dead flesh and exhaust yourself trying to control it.

Or walk by the living Spirit and experience the freedom, power, and fruit He produces.

The promise is clear:

"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

Not might not. Not probably won't. **Will not.**

That's a guarantee. From God. To you.

Walk by the Spirit.

And the flesh problem takes care of itself.

Not because you managed it so well. But because you're empowered by something greater.

Stop dragging the corpse.

Start walking by the Spirit.

And experience the freedom Christ purchased for you.

Application Questions

- 1. Are you currently dragging the flesh (trying to manage/control it through self-effort) or walking by the Spirit (yielding to His power)? How can you tell?**
- 2. What does it practically look like for you to "walk BY the Spirit" (using Him as your means/power source) instead of "walking WITH the Spirit" (Him helping your efforts)?**
- 3. Where are you energizing the flesh by focusing on it, trying to control it, or attempting to crucify it daily? What would it look like to stop energizing it and start walking by the Spirit instead?**
- 4. When you look at the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control), are these genuine fruit in your life or works you're trying to manufacture?**
- 5. What's your primary strategy when temptation comes: flesh-control ("Don't do it, don't do it") or Spirit-walking ("Spirit, I yield to You")? What needs to change?**
- 6. If the promise is that you WILL NOT fulfill flesh desires when you walk by the Spirit, why do you sometimes still fulfill them? Are you walking by the Spirit or dragging the flesh?**
- 7. In what area of your life do you most need to shift from dragging the flesh to walking by the Spirit? What's your first step?**
- 8. How does understanding that Spirit-filled life is "not a special deluxe edition" but normal Christianity change your expectations and approach?**
- 9. What would change in your daily life if you really believed the Spirit's power is sufficient to overcome the flesh's pull—not through your management but through your yielding?**

10. Are you experiencing rest and fruitfulness (marks of Spirit-walking) or exhaustion and fruitlessness (marks of flesh-dragging)? What does that tell you about which way you're currently living?

CHAPTER 16

Abiding — The Posture of the New Creation

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." — John 15:4-5 (NASB)

Abiding is the most restful word in Scripture.

Not striving. Not achieving. Not performing. Not proving.

Abiding.

Remaining. Resting. Staying. Dwelling. Being.

This is the posture of the new creation. Not the posture of someone trying to become something they're not. But the posture of someone who already is what God says they are, now learning to live from that reality.

Jesus uses the illustration of a vine and branches. And it's the perfect picture because it shows us exactly what our job is—and what it isn't.

Your job as a branch: Abide. Stay connected. Remain in the vine. Receive life.

Not your job: Produce fruit. Generate life. Prove your connection. Earn your position. Work to stay attached.

The branch doesn't produce fruit by trying harder. It bears fruit by abiding in the vine. The life of the vine flows through the branch, and fruit happens naturally, organically, inevitably.

That's you. You're the branch. Christ is the vine. You're already connected—you're IN Him. Now abide there. Remain there. Rest there. Receive from there.

And fruit will happen. Not because you're working to produce it. But because you're connected to the Life-source who produces it.

This is what the new creation looks like in practice: not striving to become, but abiding in what already is. Not working to achieve, but resting in what's been given. Not proving your position, but remaining in your position.

Abiding is the posture of the new creation. And it changes everything.

ABIDING IS REMAINING IN POSITION, NOT ACHIEVING A POSITION

Let's start with the most important distinction: You're not abiding to get INTO Christ. You're abiding because you're already IN Christ.

The position is settled: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). You're IN Him. That's your position. Your location. Your reality.

The practice is abiding: "Abide in Me." Remain where you are. Stay in the position you already have. Don't leave. Don't wander. Don't try to find life somewhere else.

The wrong understanding: "If I abide well enough, I'll get into Christ and stay in Christ."

The right understanding: "I'm already in Christ. Now I'm going to abide there—remain in that position, live from that reality, receive from that connection."

Think about a branch on a tree. The branch doesn't abide to become part of the tree. It's already part of the tree. It abides—stays connected, remains attached—so the life of the tree can flow through it.

You're not abiding to achieve union with Christ. You're abiding because you're already in union with Christ.

Position (settled): You're IN Christ. Done. Finished. Accomplished at salvation.

Practice (ongoing): Abide IN Christ. Remain there. Live from there. Receive from there.

This distinction eliminates anxiety. You're not trying to get somewhere you're not. You're learning to remain where you already are.

You're not climbing a ladder to reach Christ. You're resting in Christ and letting His life flow through you.

Position: IN Christ (settled). Practice: Abide IN Christ (ongoing).

One is accomplished. The other is experienced. But both are real, and both are yours.

YOU'RE ALREADY IN CHRIST (POSITION)

Before we talk about abiding, we need to establish position. Because you can't abide where you're not.

Where are you? In Christ.

Not trying to get into Christ. Not working to stay in Christ through performance. Not earning your way into Christ through obedience.

In Christ. That's your position. Your location. Your reality.

Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" (or "in Him") over 160 times in his letters. It's his favorite description of Christian identity. Why? Because it's the fundamental reality of what happened to you at salvation.

You were placed in Christ. United to Him. Joined to Him. Positioned in Him.

What does it mean to be IN Christ?

It means:

- His death is your death
- His burial is your burial
- His resurrection is your resurrection
- His life is your life
- His righteousness is your righteousness
- His standing before the Father is your standing
- His acceptance is your acceptance
- His position is your position

You're not near Christ. Not close to Christ. Not associated with Christ.

IN Christ. Inside. United. One.

This is position. This is location. This is where you are.

And this position is settled. It's not fluctuating based on your performance. It's not uncertain based on your obedience. It's not conditional based on your abiding.

You're IN Christ because God placed you there at salvation. And nothing can remove you from that position.

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

You're in Christ. Settled. Secure. Permanent.

Now abide there.

NOW REMAIN/ABIDE THERE (PRACTICE)

"Abide in Me."

You're IN Christ (position). Now abide IN Christ (practice).

Remain where you are. Stay connected. Live from that position. Don't wander. Don't seek life elsewhere. Don't try to supplement Christ's life with the world's life or the flesh's life.

Abide (Greek: *meno*) means to remain, to stay, to dwell, to continue, to be present.

It's not a one-time action. It's an ongoing posture. A continuous state. A way of living.

Think about someone who abides in a house. They don't just visit. They live there. They dwell there. They remain there. It's their home. They don't keep leaving to find shelter elsewhere—they've found their home and they stay there.

That's you with Christ. You're not visiting. You're dwelling. You're remaining. You're making your home in Him.

What does abiding look like practically?

It's not complicated. It's not a technique. It's not a program. It's a relationship. A posture. A way of living.

Abiding is:

- Staying conscious of His presence throughout the day
- Talking to Him continuously (prayer as conversation, not just formal times)
- Listening to Him through His Word
- Responding to His promptings
- Trusting Him in each moment
- Drawing on His life instead of your own resources
- Remaining aware that you're IN Him

It's living FROM the connection instead of trying to CREATE the connection.

You're not working to get connected to Christ. You're already connected. Now you're remaining in that connection, conscious of it, drawing from it, living from it.

FRUIT IS THE RESULT OF ABIDING, NOT THE REQUIREMENT

Here's where most Christians get it backwards:

We think: "If I produce enough fruit, I'll prove I'm abiding in Christ."

But Jesus says: "If you abide in Me, you'll bear fruit."

Fruit is not the requirement for abiding. Fruit is the result of abiding.

Wrong understanding: "I need to produce fruit to prove I'm a good branch."

Right understanding: "I'm a branch connected to the Vine. As I abide, fruit happens naturally."

Wrong understanding: "I need to work at fruit production to maintain my connection."

Right understanding: "I maintain my connection through abiding, and fruit is the natural result."

The branch doesn't bear fruit to prove it's part of the vine. The branch bears fruit because it IS part of the vine and the vine's life flows through it.

You don't produce fruit to prove you're in Christ. You bear fruit because you ARE in Christ and His life flows through you.

This eliminates performance anxiety.

You're not being evaluated on your fruit production. You're not in competition with other branches. You're not trying to produce impressive fruit to earn the Vinedresser's approval.

You're abiding. Staying connected. Receiving life. And fruit happens as a natural result of that life flowing through you.

Sometimes abundantly. Sometimes more slowly. Sometimes in different seasons. But always as a result of abiding, never as a requirement for it.

WHAT ABIDING IS NOT

Let's clear up the confusion by being explicit about what abiding is NOT:

Abiding Is NOT Earning Acceptance

You're not abiding to earn God's acceptance. You're already accepted in Christ (Ephesians 1:6).

Abiding isn't your work to become acceptable. Abiding is your response to already being accepted.

The old man's approach: "If I abide well enough, God will accept me."

The new man's approach: "God has accepted me in Christ. Now I'm abiding in the One who's already accepted me."

Abiding Is NOT Maintaining Salvation

You're not abiding to keep yourself saved. Christ keeps you saved.

"I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28).

You can't fall out of Christ through poor abiding. You're held by His power, not by your performance.

The fear-based approach: "I better abide well or I'll lose my salvation."

The truth-based approach: "I'm secure in Christ. I abide because I'm loved and alive in Him, not to maintain my position."

Abiding Is NOT Working for Fruit

The branch doesn't work to produce fruit. It receives life, and fruit happens.

You're not abiding to work up fruit. You're abiding, and fruit is the natural result.

The performance approach: "I'm abiding so I can produce impressive fruit."

The restful approach: "I'm abiding. The Vine produces fruit through me."

Abiding Is NOT Proving Your Position

You don't abide to prove you're really in Christ. You abide because you ARE in Christ.

Your position isn't uncertain, needing proof. Your position is settled, needing practice.

The anxious approach: "If I abide well enough, I'll prove I'm really saved."

The confident approach: "I'm in Christ. I abide because that's where life is found."

Abiding is not earning, maintaining, working, or proving. It's receiving, remaining, resting, and responding.

WHAT ABIDING IS

Now let's be clear about what abiding actually IS:

Abiding Is Resting in Union

You're not working to achieve union with Christ. You're resting in the union that already exists.

"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 6:15). You're joined to Him. United with Him. One with Him.

Abiding is resting in that union. Not creating it. Not maintaining it through effort. Resting in what already is.

This is restful: You're not striving to get close to God. You're resting in the reality that you're already IN Him.

This is secure: Your union doesn't depend on your abiding. Your abiding flows from your union.

This is liberating: You're not anxiously trying to stay connected. You're peacefully remaining in a connection that's already established.

Abiding Is Remaining in Awareness

The connection is always there. Abiding is staying aware of it.

You're always in Christ. But you don't always live with awareness of that reality. Abiding is cultivating awareness of the connection that already exists.

Practically:

- Talking to Him throughout the day (not just in formal prayer times)
- Acknowledging His presence in each moment
- Recognizing that He's with you, in you, for you
- Living consciously instead of autopilot

You're not creating His presence through awareness. You're becoming aware of the presence that's already there.

Abiding Is Receiving His Life

The vine's life flows into the branch. The branch doesn't generate life—it receives it.

You don't generate Christ's life through effort. You receive it through abiding.

What are you receiving?

- His love (receiving it, not earning it)
- His peace (receiving it, not manufacturing it)
- His wisdom (receiving it, not figuring everything out yourself)
- His strength (receiving it, not generating it through willpower)
- His life (receiving it, not producing it through self-effort)

Abiding is the posture of receiving. Open hands, not clenched fists. Receptive heart, not striving will.

Abiding Is Responding to His Love

You don't abide to get God to love you. You abide because God loves you.

"We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Abiding is your response to being loved. It's staying in relationship with the One who loves you. It's enjoying Him because He delights in you.

This is relational, not transactional:

- Not "I'll abide so You'll love me"
- But "You love me; I'm abiding in Your love"

This is responsive, not obligatory:

- Not "I have to abide"
- But "I get to abide—He loves me and I want to be with Him"

Abiding is the natural response of someone who's been loved, accepted, and made alive in Christ.

THE BRANCH'S JOB: STAY CONNECTED

Let's return to Jesus' illustration. What's the branch's job?

Not the branch's job:

- Produce fruit
- Generate life
- Create sap
- Make things happen
- Prove its value
- Compete with other branches
- Anxiety about productivity

The branch's job:

- Stay connected to the vine
- Receive sap (life) from the vine
- Everything else happens naturally

That's it. That's the whole job. Stay connected. Receive life.

The vine does everything else:

- The vine produces the life
- The vine generates the sap
- The vine creates the nutrients
- The vine produces the fruit (through the branch)
- The vine determines the type of fruit
- The vine determines the timing of fruit
- The vine determines the abundance of fruit

The branch just stays connected and receives.

Hudson Taylor said it perfectly:

"The branch of the vine does not worry, and toil, and rush here to seek for sunshine, and there to find rain. No; it rests in union and communion with the vine; and at the right time, and in the right way, is the right fruit found on it. Let us so abide in the Lord Jesus."

The branch doesn't worry. Doesn't toil. Doesn't rush around seeking resources. It rests in union. It remains in communion. And fruit happens.

Not because the branch is anxious about fruit production. But because the branch is connected to the Vine.

That's you. You're the branch. Christ is the Vine.

Your job: Stay connected. Receive life. Rest in union.

His job: Everything else.

APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING

Jesus adds a sobering statement: "Apart from Me you can do nothing."

Nothing. Not "you'll struggle." Not "it will be harder." Nothing.

This isn't discouragement. It's liberation.

It's discouraging if you think: "I should be able to do this on my own, but Jesus is saying I can't. I'm such a failure."

It's liberating when you realize: "I'm not supposed to do this on my own. I was never designed to. I was created to depend on Him, receive from Him, abide in Him. And in Him, I can do everything He calls me to."

Apart from Christ:

- You can't produce spiritual fruit
- You can't live the Christian life
- You can't transform yourself
- You can't generate love, joy, peace, patience
- You can't overcome sin in your own strength
- You can do nothing of eternal value

In Christ, abiding in Him:

- He produces fruit through you
- He lives the Christian life through you

- He transforms you from within
- He generates love, joy, peace, patience in you
- He overcomes sin through His power in you
- He produces everything of eternal value

Apart from Him: nothing. In Him: everything.

This eliminates self-reliance. Destroys self-sufficiency. Kills independence.

And it should. Because you're a branch. And branches aren't designed for independence. They're designed for dependence. For connection. For abiding.

You can't do this Christian life on your own. You were never meant to.

You can do it in Christ. Because He's the Vine, and His life flows through you as you abide in Him.

HOW TO ABIDE: PRACTICAL RHYTHMS

So practically, how do you abide? What does it look like in daily life?

1. Start the Day in Awareness

Before you get out of bed, acknowledge the reality: "I'm in Christ. Christ is in me. Today I'm going to abide in Him."

Not earning His presence. Not working to get connected. Acknowledging the connection that already exists.

Morning abiding: "Lord, I'm in You. You're in me. I'm going to walk with You today. I'm going to receive from You. I'm going to respond to You. I'm abiding in the Vine, trusting You to produce Your life through me."

2. Maintain Conversational Prayer Throughout the Day

Abiding is relational. And relationships require communication.

Talk to Him throughout the day. Not just formal prayer times (though those are valuable). Conversational prayer. Ongoing dialogue.

Examples:

- "Thank You for that."

- "Help me with this."
- "I'm struggling here—I need Your strength."
- "That was beautiful—You're so good!"
- "I'm tempted—empower me to walk away."

You're not performing prayers to earn His ear. You're talking to Someone who's always with you, always listening, always present.

3. Receive from His Word

"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

The Word is how you hear His voice. Abiding includes receiving from Scripture—not as a duty to check off, but as receiving life from the Vine.

Not: "I better read my Bible to maintain my position with God."

But: "I'm reading His Word to hear His voice, receive His truth, know Him better."

You're receiving, not performing.

4. Respond to His Promptings

As you abide, the Spirit prompts. He guides. He nudges. He leads.

Abiding means being responsive. Listening. Obeying. Following.

Examples:

- Prompted to encourage someone → respond
- Prompted to apologize → respond
- Prompted to give → respond
- Prompted to stop and pray → respond
- Prompted to avoid something → respond

You're not earning favor through obedience. You're responding to the Vine's direction because you're the branch.

5. Trust Him in Each Moment

Abiding is moment-by-moment trust.

When anxiety comes: "I'm abiding in You. You're my peace."

When temptation hits: "I'm abiding in You. Your power is greater than this pull."

When decisions loom: "I'm abiding in You. I trust Your wisdom."

When circumstances overwhelm: "I'm abiding in You. You're my strength."

You're not generating peace, power, wisdom, or strength. You're receiving from the Vine as you abide.

ABIDING IN DIFFERENT SEASONS

The branch doesn't look the same in every season. And that's okay.

Spring: Budding. New growth. Fresh life. Exciting fruit development.

Summer: Full foliage. Abundant fruit. Productive season. Visible fruitfulness.

Fall: Harvest. Fruit ripening. Colors changing. Transition time.

Winter: Bare branches. No visible fruit. Dormant season. Hidden growth.

The branch is still abiding in all seasons. But it looks different. And that's by design.

You're not always in summer season. Sometimes you're in winter—no visible fruit, feeling dormant, wondering if anything's happening.

But you're still abiding. And the Vine is still working. Just not always in ways you can see immediately.

Trust the Vinedresser. He knows which season you're in. He knows when fruit will come. He's working even when you can't see it.

Your job doesn't change: Abide. Stay connected. Receive life.

The Vine's job doesn't change: Produce fruit at the right time in the right way.

Don't judge your abiding by visible fruit in every season. Some seasons are for fruit. Some seasons are for growth that prepares for future fruit.

Abide in all seasons. Trust the Vine. Rest in union.

THE SIMPLICITY OF ABIDING

Abiding is simple. We complicate it.

We think: "Abiding must be a complex spiritual discipline requiring advanced techniques and rigorous training."

Jesus says: "Stay connected. Receive life. Like a branch."

We think: "I need to achieve a certain level of abiding to be acceptable."

Jesus says: "You're already in Me. Just remain there."

We think: "Abiding is my work to maintain my connection."

Jesus says: "I hold you. You rest in that. Receive from that."

Abiding is not complicated. It's simple.

But simple doesn't mean easy. It requires:

- Faith (trusting you're really in Him when you don't feel it)
- Discipline (cultivating awareness instead of living on autopilot)
- Dependence (receiving instead of generating)
- Humility (admitting you can do nothing apart from Him)

Simple, but not always easy. Especially in a culture that values self-reliance, achievement, and independence.

But it's the design. Branches abide in vines. Children rest in parents' arms. New creations live from the Life-source.

You're not working to achieve connection. You're resting in connection that already exists.

You're not producing fruit to prove your value. You're bearing fruit because you're connected to the Vine.

You're not complicating abiding with techniques and formulas. You're simply remaining where you already are—in Christ.

Stay connected. Receive life. Everything else happens naturally.

That's abiding. And it's the posture of the new creation.

WHEN ABIDING FEELS DIFFICULT

Sometimes abiding feels difficult. You feel disconnected. Distant. Dry.

First, recognize: Feelings don't determine reality. You're in Christ whether you feel connected or not. The connection is real even when awareness is low.

Second, return: Abiding isn't about never wandering in your awareness. It's about returning when you realize you've been operating on autopilot.

"I wandered off in my mind. I was trying to do this in my own strength. I forgot I'm in You. I return now. I abide again."

Third, receive: Even when it feels dry, you're still receiving. The branch doesn't always feel the sap flowing, but it's flowing nonetheless.

Trust the reality more than the feeling. You're in Christ. The connection is real. The life is flowing. Abide there.

Fourth, be patient: Sometimes abiding feels difficult because you're in a winter season. Growth is happening, but it's not visible yet.

Don't abandon abiding because you're not seeing immediate fruit. The Vine knows what He's doing. Your job is to stay connected, not to evaluate productivity.

Abiding isn't always easy. But it's always right. Because you're a branch, and branches abide in vines.

THE INVITATION TO ABIDE

"Abide in Me, and I in you."

This is invitation, not demand. It's welcome, not threat.

Jesus isn't saying, "You better abide or else."

He's saying, "I'm the Vine. You're the branch. Life is found in connection with Me. Abide here. Remain here. This is where you'll find life, joy, peace, fruit, everything you need."

The invitation is to:

- Rest instead of strive
- Receive instead of generate
- Remain instead of wander
- Trust instead of work

- Abide instead of achieve

The invitation promises:

- Life flowing through you
- Fruit happening naturally
- Needs being met
- Strength for each moment
- Peace in the midst of chaos
- Love overflowing to others

This is the posture of the new creation: abiding in the Vine.

Not because you have to. But because life is found there. Because He's invited you. Because you're already in Him and this is what branches do.

"Abide in Me."

Will you?

Will you stop striving and start resting?

Will you stop trying to produce fruit and start receiving life?

Will you stop proving your position and start remaining in your position?

Will you be the branch you already are—connected to the Vine, receiving His life, bearing His fruit?

That's abiding. That's the posture of the new creation.

And it's the most restful, fruitful, life-giving place you could ever be.

Abide in Him. He's already in you.

And watch as the life of the Vine produces fruit through you that you could never generate yourself.

Application Questions

1. **What's the difference between abiding to GET into Christ versus abiding because you're already IN Christ? How does that distinction change your approach to abiding?**
2. **Are you viewing fruit as the requirement for abiding or as the result of abiding? How does that shift change your relationship with Christ?**
3. **Which of the "what abiding is NOT" (earning acceptance, maintaining salvation, working for fruit, proving position) have you been treating as what abiding IS? What needs to change?**
4. **If abiding is resting in union, remaining in awareness, receiving His life, and responding to His love—which of these four is weakest in your life right now?**
5. **What does it practically look like for you to "stay connected and receive life" like a branch today? What rhythms support that?**
6. **Where are you trying to produce fruit through your effort instead of bearing fruit through abiding? What would change if you shifted from producing to receiving?**
7. **If "apart from Christ you can do nothing," what are you currently trying to do in your own strength that you need to surrender to Him?**
8. **When abiding feels difficult or you feel disconnected, how do you respond? Do you panic and try harder, or do you return and trust the connection is still real?**
9. **What season are you in (spring/summer/fall/winter), and how does understanding that seasons are normal help you trust the Vine even when fruit isn't visible?**
10. **If Jesus is inviting you to abide (not demanding it), what's your response to His invitation today? What does accepting that invitation look like for you practically?**

PART FIVE: THE FREEDOM OF LETTING THE DEAD STAY DEAD

CHAPTER 17

What Happens When You Finally Let Go

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." — Matthew 11:28-30 (NASB)

You're tired.

Not just physically tired. Soul-tired. The kind of exhaustion that comes from carrying weight you were never meant to carry.

The weight of the old man. The burden of maintaining a dead identity. The exhausting effort of dragging around the corpse of who you used to be while trying to live the resurrection life Christ gave you.

You're tired of trying. Tired of performing. Tired of measuring yourself. Tired of shame. Tired of the treadmill. Tired of "never enough." Tired of carrying what God has already buried.

And Jesus sees you. Bent under the weight. Weary from the burden. Heavy-laden with the corpse you've been dragging.

And He says what He's been saying all along:

"Come to Me... and I will give you rest."

Not "try harder." Not "do better." Not "manage it more effectively."

Rest.

But there's a condition: You have to let go of what you're carrying. You can't receive His light burden while clutching your heavy one. You can't experience His easy yoke while dragging around the old man's impossible demands.

You have to finally let go.

Put down the corpse. Stop the resurrection efforts. Quit dragging around the dead man.

And when you do—when you finally release what you've been white-knuckling for so long—something remarkable happens.

You discover what you've been missing all along: rest.

Not just physical rest. Soul rest. The rest Jesus promised. The rest that comes from living as the new creation you are instead of trying to rehabilitate the old creation that's dead.

This is what happens when you finally let go.

THE INVITATION TO REST

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

This is one of the most beautiful invitations in all of Scripture. And it's spoken directly to you.

Not to the put-together. Not to those who have it all figured out. Not to the spiritually impressive or the religiously successful.

To the *weary*. To the *heavy-laden*. To the exhausted. To the burdened. To those who are bent under weight they can't carry anymore.

That's you. That's all of us who've been dragging the dead man around.

And Jesus doesn't say, "Buck up. Try harder. You should be stronger than this."

He says, "Come to Me. I'll give you rest."

This is invitation, not condemnation. He's not disappointed in your weariness. He's offering you relief from it.

This is promise, not suggestion. "I *will* give you rest." Not might. Not maybe. Will. Guaranteed.

This is gift, not transaction. You don't earn rest by performing better. You receive rest by coming to Him.

But notice what He doesn't say: He doesn't say, "Keep carrying what you're carrying, and I'll help you carry it better."

He says, "Take My yoke upon you."

There's an exchange happening here. You give Him your burden. He gives you His yoke. Your heavy load for His light one. Your impossible demands for His easy requirements. Your exhausting striving for His restful abiding.

But the exchange requires release. You can't take on His yoke while still carrying the corpse. You have to let go of what you've been dragging.

WEARINESS FROM DRAGGING THE CORPSE

Let's be honest about what's made you weary.

It's not the Christian life itself. Jesus said His yoke is easy and His burden is light. The life He offers is supposed to be restful, not exhausting.

What's exhausted you is dragging around the dead man while trying to live the Christian life.

You're weary from:

Constant self-monitoring. The endless internal surveillance. "Am I good enough? Am I doing enough? Am I spiritual enough? Am I growing fast enough?" The old man required constant evaluation, and you've internalized his measuring system.

Performance pressure. The crushing weight of thinking your standing with God depends on your spiritual productivity. The anxiety of wondering if you're doing enough, being enough, proving enough. The old man's performance-based identity exhausts you.

Chronic shame. The never-ending voice that says "not enough, not enough, not enough." The shame that fuels your religion but never brings transformation. The shame that drives you to try harder but never leads to rest. The old man ran on shame, and you're still using his toxic fuel.

Religious striving. The treadmill that never stops. Always more to do. Always another level to reach. Always someone holier, more devoted, more disciplined than you. The old man's relentless pursuit of righteousness through works has drained you dry.

Identity confusion. The exhaustion of not knowing who you really are. Living like you're still the old man while knowing (theologically) you're new. The cognitive dissonance of declaring you're free while living in bondage. The weariness of inhabiting two identities at once.

This is what's exhausted you. Not Christ's yoke—that's easy. Not His burden—that's light. But the dead weight of the old man you've been dragging.

And Jesus sees your weariness. He knows the burden. He understands the exhaustion.

And He offers rest.

But rest requires release. You have to let go of what's making you weary.

THE EXCHANGE: YOUR BURDEN FOR HIS YOKE

"Take My yoke upon you."

Jesus doesn't remove all burdens. He exchanges them.

You give Him your burden (the dead man, the performance pressure, the shame, the striving). He gives you His yoke (relationship, identity in Him, abiding, grace).

Your burden:

- Maintaining a dead identity
- Earning acceptance through performance
- Proving your worth through achievement
- Managing shame through religious activity
- Controlling the flesh through self-effort
- Generating righteousness through works

His yoke:

- Living from your new identity
- Resting in acceptance already given
- Knowing your worth is in Christ
- Walking in freedom from shame
- Yielding to the Spirit's power
- Receiving righteousness as a gift

Your burden is heavy. It was never meant to be carried. It's the weight of trying to do what only God can do—make you righteous, transform you, keep you, save you.

His yoke is easy. Not because there's no work involved, but because you're yoked with Him. He carries the weight. You walk alongside Him. His strength, not yours. His power, not yours. His work, not yours.

Your burden is impossible. You cannot drag the dead man and live resurrection life. You cannot improve the old creation and become new. You cannot earn what's already been given.

His burden is light. Because He's already done the work. Already accomplished salvation. Already made you new. Already given you His righteousness. Already secured your position. The heavy lifting is done. Now you're learning to live from what He's accomplished.

But the exchange requires your hands to be empty. You can't receive His light yoke while clutching your heavy burden.

You have to let go.

THE RELEASE: PERMISSION TO STOP

When you finally let go of the dead man, here's what you're releasing:

Permission to Stop Trying

You've been trying to become what God says you already are. Trying to earn what's already been given. Trying to achieve what's already been accomplished.

And Jesus says: Stop.

You don't have to try to become new. You are new.

You don't have to try to be righteous. You're already righteous in Christ.

You don't have to try to be accepted. You're already accepted in the Beloved.

Permission to stop trying doesn't mean passivity. It means shifting from striving to abiding. From earning to receiving. From generating to expressing.

You're not stopping effort. You're stopping the exhausting effort to become what you already are.

Freedom to Stop Performing

You've been performing for God. Performing for others. Performing for yourself. Trying to prove your worth, earn your keep, justify your existence.

And Jesus says: You don't have to perform for Me.

I'm not evaluating your spiritual productivity. I'm not measuring your performance. I'm not comparing you to other Christians. I'm not waiting for you to impress Me.

I'm your Father. You're My child. I delight in you. Not because of what you do. Because of whose you are.

Freedom to stop performing doesn't mean stopping service. It means serving from love instead of from fear. From overflow instead of from obligation. From gratitude instead of from guilt.

You're not stopping obedience. You're stopping the exhausting performance to earn what you already have.

Relief from Constant Self-Monitoring

You've been watching yourself constantly. Evaluating every thought, analyzing every motive, measuring every spiritual metric. The internal surveillance never stops.

And Jesus says: I'm not asking you to live under constant scrutiny.

I'm asking you to live in relationship with Me. To walk with Me. To abide in Me. Not to monitor yourself obsessively to make sure you're measuring up.

Relief from constant self-monitoring doesn't mean no self-awareness. It means shifting from anxious evaluation to restful awareness. From "Am I doing it right?" to "Am I abiding in Him?"

You're not stopping self-examination. You're stopping the exhausting surveillance that comes from the old man's performance system.

Liberation from Shame-Driven Striving

You've been using shame as fuel. "I'm not enough, so I better do more." "I'm failing, so I better try harder." "I'm broken, so I better work to fix myself."

And Jesus says: I don't use shame to motivate you.

Shame is not from Me. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). I don't condemn you to motivate you. I love you to transform you.

Liberation from shame-driven striving doesn't mean no conviction of sin. The Spirit convicts. But conviction leads to repentance (change of mind), not to shame (identity of worthlessness).

You're not stopping growth. You're stopping the toxic use of shame as a motivator for change.

WHAT YOU'LL DISCOVER WHEN YOU LET GO

When you finally release the dead man and receive Christ's yoke, you'll discover things you've been missing—things that were always available but hidden under the weight of the corpse you were dragging.

True Rest (Not Just Physical)

Physical rest is good. Sleep is necessary. Sabbath is important.

But Jesus offers something deeper: rest for your souls.

"You will find rest for your souls."

Soul rest is:

- Peace in the midst of chaos
- Calm in the face of uncertainty
- Security that doesn't depend on circumstances
- Settledness that comes from knowing who you are
- Freedom from the constant anxiety of "am I enough?"

This is what you've been missing. Physical rest doesn't cure soul weariness. Vacation doesn't fix spiritual exhaustion. You need rest for your soul—and that comes from finally letting go of what's been exhausting you.

Soul rest happens when:

- You stop trying to earn what's already given
- You rest in your identity instead of working for your identity
- You receive from God instead of performing for God
- You live from acceptance instead of for acceptance
- You abide in Christ instead of strive for Christ

This is the rest Jesus promised. And it's yours when you let go of the dead man.

The Gentleness of Jesus

"Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart."

When you're dragging the dead man, you experience Jesus as a harsh taskmaster. Always demanding more. Never satisfied. Disappointed in your failures. Waiting for you to get your act together.

But that's not Jesus. That's the old man's projection of God.

When you finally let go, you discover who Jesus actually is: gentle and humble in heart.

Gentle doesn't mean soft or weak. It means strong but tender. Powerful but kind. Truthful but compassionate.

Jesus doesn't beat you up for failing. He picks you up when you fall. He doesn't condemn you for struggling. He empowers you to overcome. He doesn't demand perfection. He gives you His perfection and then patiently transforms you from the inside out.

Humble in heart means He doesn't stand over you demanding. He comes alongside you serving. He doesn't lord His authority over you. He uses His power for you.

When you let go of the dead man's religious system, you discover the actual Jesus. And He's nothing like the harsh version the old man projected.

He's gentle. He's kind. He's patient. He's for you, not against you.

The Lightness of Grace

"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Grace is light. Law is heavy.

Performance is heavy. Identity is light.

Earning is heavy. Receiving is light.

Striving is heavy. Abiding is light.

The old man's system is heavy:

- Work to earn
- Perform to prove
- Strive to achieve
- Monitor to maintain
- Anxiety to motivate

Christ's system is light:

- Receive what's given
- Rest in what's true

- Abide to express
- Trust to experience
- Love to motivate

When you let go of the heavy system and embrace the light one, you discover what Jesus meant: His yoke is easy. His burden is light.

Not because there's no work. Not because there's no discipline. Not because there's no obedience.

But because the work flows from rest. The discipline flows from love. The obedience flows from identity. And all of it is empowered by Him, not generated by you.

That's light. That's grace. That's the freedom of letting the dead man stay dead.

THE GOSPEL THAT LIBERATES

"The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." — Timothy Keller

This is the gospel that liberates.

You're more sinful than you thought. The old man was completely corrupted. Totally depraved. Utterly incapable of producing righteousness. Worse than you wanted to admit.

But that's okay. Because the old man is dead. You're not trying to improve him anymore. You're not pretending he was just a little broken and needed fixing. He was condemned, and God killed him. Good riddance.

You're more loved than you hoped. God didn't wait for you to get your act together. He loved you while you were still a sinner (Romans 5:8). He accepted you while you were still dead in trespasses (Ephesians 2:4-5). He made you new not because you earned it but because He loved you.

And that love doesn't fluctuate based on your performance. You're loved because you're His child. Accepted because you're in Christ. Delighted in because you're the Beloved.

This gospel liberates because it destroys both pride and despair.

Pride says, "I'm not that bad. I can fix myself. I just need to try harder." The gospel says, "You were that bad. The old man was completely corrupted. But God made you new."

Despair says, "I'm too broken. Too far gone. Too messed up. God could never love me." The gospel says, "You are loved beyond measure. Accepted completely. Made new in Christ. Nothing can separate you from God's love."

When you embrace this gospel—both the depth of your sin and the height of God's love—you're free.

Free to let go of the old man without despair (he's dead; you're new).

Free to rest in God's love without pride (you didn't earn it; it's grace).

Free to live as the new creation you are without the burden of the old creation you were.

This is what happens when you finally let go.

WHAT CHANGES WHEN YOU RELEASE THE BURDEN

Let's get practical. What actually changes in your daily life when you finally let go of the dead man and receive Christ's rest?

Your Relationship with God Changes

Before (dragging the corpse):

- Approaching God with anxiety (am I acceptable?)
- Relating to God through performance (trying to earn favor)
- Viewing God as disappointed taskmaster (never satisfied)
- Experiencing guilt and shame in His presence

After (letting go):

- Approaching God with confidence (I'm already accepted)
- Relating to God through love (responding to His love for me)
- Knowing God as gentle Father (patient, kind, for me)
- Experiencing freedom and joy in His presence

Your View of Yourself Changes

Before:

- Identity based on performance (I am what I do)

- Worth based on achievement (I'm valuable if I'm useful)
- Constant self-condemnation (I'm never enough)
- Shame as primary emotion about self

After:

- Identity based on Christ (I am who God says I am)
- Worth based on position (I'm valuable because I'm His child)
- Acceptance as primary truth (I'm enough in Christ)
- Gratitude as primary emotion about self

Your Approach to Sin Changes

Before:

- Shame when you fail (I'm such a failure)
- Despair about patterns (I'll never change)
- Trying harder to avoid sin (white-knuckle obedience)
- Sin defining your identity (I'm a sinner)

After:

- Confession when you fail (that was inconsistent with who I am)
- Hope about transformation (God is changing me from within)
- Trusting the Spirit to empower (walking by the Spirit)
- Identity defining sin's impact (I'm a saint who sinned)

Your Service Changes

Before:

- Serving from obligation (I have to)
- Serving to earn approval (proving my worth)
- Exhausting, draining service (running on empty)
- Resentment when not appreciated

After:

- Serving from gratitude (I get to)
- Serving from overflow (expressing what I've received)
- Energizing, life-giving service (flowing from fullness)
- Joy regardless of recognition

Your Rest Changes

Before:

- Can't rest (too much to do to prove myself)
- Guilt when resting (should be doing more)
- Rest doesn't refresh (still anxious inside)
- Vacation doesn't cure weariness (soul still tired)

After:

- Permission to rest (accepted already, nothing to prove)
- Freedom in resting (receiving from God, not performing for Him)
- Rest actually refreshes (soul rest, not just physical)
- Sabbath restores (genuine peace, not just break from activity)

Everything changes. Not because you're trying to change. But because you're living from a different foundation—new creation instead of old, grace instead of law, abiding instead of striving.

THE RELIEF OF FINALLY LETTING GO

There's a moment when you finally let go. When you stop clutching the corpse. When you release the burden. When you lay down the dead man and receive Christ's yoke instead.

And in that moment, there's relief. Deep, soul-level relief.

Relief that you don't have to pretend anymore. You can be honest about your struggles without fearing condemnation. You can admit your failures without losing your identity. You can be real because your acceptance doesn't depend on looking perfect.

Relief that you don't have to perform anymore. You can stop the exhausting show. Stop proving yourself. Stop earning your keep. Stop justifying your existence. You're loved, accepted, delighted in—not because of your performance but because of Christ's.

Relief that you don't have to carry this anymore. The weight lifts. The burden releases. The exhaustion eases. Not instantly, not all at once, but progressively. You feel lighter because you are lighter. You're not dragging the corpse anymore.

Relief that you can rest. Finally. After all the striving, all the trying, all the performing, all the exhausting effort to become what you already are—you can rest. You can breathe. You can be.

This is the relief Jesus promised: "I will give you rest."

And He does. When you finally let go and receive what He's offering.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO PICK IT BACK UP

Here's the temptation: You let go of the dead man, experience relief and rest, and then pick him back up again.

Because the old patterns are strong. The old systems are familiar. The old way of operating is ingrained.

So you'll be tempted to:

- Go back to performance-based acceptance
- Return to shame-driven motivation
- Resume constant self-monitoring
- Restart the exhausting striving

And when that temptation comes, remember:

You don't have to pick up what you've put down.

The dead man is dead. He doesn't need your attention. He doesn't need your management. He doesn't need you to resurrect him one more time.

When the old patterns pull: "That's the old system. I'm not going back there. I'm living from my new identity. I'm resting in Christ's finished work. I'm abiding in the Vine. I'm not picking up that burden again."

When shame speaks: "There is no condemnation for those in Christ. I'm not listening to shame. I'm listening to truth. I'm believing what God says about me."

When performance pressure rises: "It is finished. I'm not earning my acceptance. I'm already accepted in Christ. I'm serving from gratitude, not for approval."

You don't have to pick up what you've put down. The dead man can stay dead. The burden can stay released. The rest can continue.

Live from freedom. Don't return to bondage.

REST FOR YOUR SOULS

"You will find rest for your souls."

This is the promise. This is what happens when you finally let go.

Not just physical rest. Not just a break from activity. But rest for your souls.

Soul rest is:

- Peace that surpasses understanding
- Security that doesn't depend on circumstances
- Identity that doesn't fluctuate with performance
- Acceptance that's already complete
- Love that never fails
- Freedom from the endless striving
- Relief from the crushing burden
- Lightness instead of heaviness
- Joy instead of drudgery
- Grace instead of law

This is what you've been missing. This is what Jesus has been offering all along. This is what's available when you finally let go of the dead man and receive the rest Christ gives.

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

He's inviting you. Right now. Right where you are.

Weary from dragging the corpse? Come. Heavy-laden with the burden of the old man? Come. Exhausted from the performance treadmill? Come. Tired of the shame-driven striving? Come.

And I will give you rest.

Not "might give you rest if you perform well enough." Not "will give you rest after you fix yourself." *Will give you rest.* Now. Today. As you come.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me.

Exchange your burden for His yoke. Your heavy load for His light one. Your exhausting striving for His restful abiding. Your performance system for His grace system.

For I am gentle and humble in heart.

He's not harsh. Not demanding. Not disappointed. Gentle. Kind. Patient. For you, not against you.

And you will find rest for your souls.

Promise. Guarantee. Certainty.

Let go. Receive. Rest.

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

This is what happens when you finally let go of the dead man and receive what Christ offers.

Rest. Freedom. Lightness. Grace.

This is the freedom of letting the dead stay dead.

Application Questions

- 1. What burden are you still carrying that Jesus is inviting you to release? What's keeping you from letting go?**
- 2. What would it feel like to finally have "rest for your soul"? What would change in your daily life?**
- 3. Which of the five releases (permission to stop trying, freedom to stop performing, relief from self-monitoring, liberation from shame-striving) do you most need right now?**

4. **How would your relationship with God change if you really experienced Him as "gentle and humble in heart" instead of as a harsh taskmaster?**
5. **What's the difference between Christ's "easy yoke and light burden" and the heavy burden you've been carrying? What makes one heavy and the other light?**
6. **Looking at the "before and after" comparisons (relationship with God, view of yourself, approach to sin, service, rest), where are you still living "before" instead of "after"?**
7. **What would it look like practically for you to stop picking up the dead man after you've put him down? What triggers the temptation to return to the old system?**
8. **If you really believed Timothy Keller's statement (more sinful than you thought, more loved than you hoped), how would that free you from both pride and despair?**
9. **What does the "relief of finally letting go" feel like for you? Have you experienced it? If not, what's preventing you from experiencing it?**
10. **Jesus says "Come to Me... I will give you rest." What's your response to that invitation today? What does "coming to Him" look like for you practically?**

CHAPTER 18

The Ongoing Renewal

"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." — 2 Corinthians 4:16 (NASB)

You're not finished.

That might sound discouraging after everything we've said about being complete in Christ, being a new creation, having everything you need in Him.

But it's not discouraging. It's hopeful.

Because you're not finished in the sense that God is still working. Still transforming. Still renewing. Still bringing into visible reality what's already true about you in Christ.

You ARE complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10). That's your position. Your identity. Your settled reality.

AND you're BEING renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). That's your experience. Your ongoing transformation. Your progressive manifestation of who you already are.

These aren't contradictions. They're two sides of the same reality:

Complete in Christ (position - instant at salvation) **Being conformed to Christ** (experience - progressive throughout life)

You're not becoming a new creation. You ARE a new creation. And that new creation is being renewed, transformed, and conformed to the image of Christ day by day.

Not to achieve your identity. But to manifest your identity. Not to become who you're not. But to increasingly express who you already are.

This is the ongoing renewal. And it's crucial to understand how it works—because if you get this wrong, you'll go right back to dragging the dead man around, trying to improve what God has already replaced.

RENEWAL HAPPENS FROM THE INSIDE OUT

"Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."

Notice the direction: inside out. Not outside in.

Not: External behavior modification gradually changing your internal nature.

But: Internal transformation progressively expressing itself in external behavior.

The outer man is decaying. Your physical body is aging, breaking down, moving toward death. That's the reality of living in a fallen world. And there's nothing you can do to stop it. No amount of exercise, healthy eating, or medical intervention can prevent the ultimate decay of the physical body.

The inner man is being renewed. Your spirit, your new creation self, your true identity in Christ—this is being renewed. Refreshed. Transformed. Made new day by day.

And the renewal starts from the inside and works its way out. Not from the outside working its way in.

This is the opposite of how the world works:

The world says: Change your behavior, and eventually your heart will follow. Act confident and you'll become confident. Fake it till you make it. External change produces internal change.

God says: I'm changing your heart, and your behavior will follow. I'm renewing your inner man, and that renewal will express itself in your outer life. Internal change produces external change.

The world's method: Outside in. Change behavior to change nature.

God's method: Inside out. Change nature, and behavior follows.

Why does this matter?

Because if you think transformation happens from outside in, you'll go back to the old man's methods: behavior modification, self-improvement, trying to change externals in hopes of changing internals.

But if you understand that transformation happens from inside out, you'll rest in God's work. You'll focus on the inner man (abiding in Christ, receiving from Him, walking by the Spirit). And you'll trust that as the inner man is renewed, the outer life will increasingly reflect that renewal.

Inside out. Always. That's how God works.

THE INNER MAN (NEW CREATION) IS BEING RENEWED

"The inner man is being renewed day by day."

Present, continuous tense. Ongoing action. Progressive renewal.

This is God's work, not yours.

You're not renewing yourself. God is renewing you. The Spirit is transforming you. Christ is conforming you to His image.

"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure"
(Philippians 2:13).

God is at work. Present tense. Currently working. Right now, today, in you.

You're not making this happen. You're not generating transformation through effort. You're not producing renewal through discipline.

God is doing it. And He's doing it in the inner man—the new creation you already are.

The inner man is:

- Your spirit (regenerated, made new)
- Your true self (the real you, hidden with Christ in God)
- Your new nature (participant in the divine nature)
- Your identity in Christ (righteous, holy, beloved)

This is what's being renewed:

- Not the old man (he's dead)
- Not the flesh (it's crucified)
- Not your old nature (it's gone)

The NEW MAN. The inner man. The new creation. That's what's being renewed.

And the renewal is day by day. Not all at once. Not overnight. But progressively, continuously, increasingly.

This means:

Yesterday's renewal isn't today's renewal. You need fresh renewal today. Daily dependence. Daily receiving. Daily transformation.

Today's renewal prepares you for tomorrow. The progressive nature means you're always growing, always developing, always being transformed from one degree of glory to another.

Tomorrow's renewal will continue the process. This doesn't stop until you see Christ face to face and are fully conformed to His image.

But all of this renewal is happening **FROM** your new identity, not **FOR** your new identity.

You're not being renewed to become new. You're being renewed because you **ARE** new.

THIS IS GOD'S WORK, NOT YOURS

Let's be absolutely clear: The ongoing renewal is God's work in you, not your work for God.

God is the actor. You are the recipient.

God is the transformer. You are the transformed.

God is the renewer. You are the renewed.

This doesn't mean you're passive. You cooperate. You yield. You participate. You abide.

But you're not the one doing the transforming. God is.

Think about it:

Can you transform your own heart? Can you change your own nature? Can you renew your own spirit?

No. These are divine works. Only God can regenerate. Only God can transform. Only God can renew.

Your old man couldn't transform himself. And your new man doesn't need to—God is already transforming the new man you are.

Your job:

- Believe what God says is true (you're new)
- Abide in Christ (remain in connection)
- Walk by the Spirit (yield to His power)
- Behold Christ (gaze at Him, not at yourself)
- Receive renewal (not generate it)

God's job:

- Transform you from the inside out

- Renew you day by day
- Conform you to Christ's image
- Produce His fruit in you
- Complete the work He started

When you understand this is God's work, the pressure comes off. You're not responsible for making transformation happen. You're responsible for cooperating with what God is doing.

Not generating. Receiving. Not producing. Yielding. Not achieving. Abiding.

METAMORPHOSIS, NOT SELF-IMPROVEMENT

The renewal Paul describes isn't self-improvement. It's metamorphosis.

Self-improvement takes what exists and makes it better. Same basic nature, just improved. Like renovating a house—same foundation, same structure, just updated.

Metamorphosis is complete transformation. Different nature. Like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly—not an improved caterpillar, but an entirely different creature.

That's what God is doing in you. Not improving the old man. Transforming the new man into the full expression of Christ's image.

The word Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 3:18 is *metamorphoo*—to transform, to transfigure, to change into another form. It's the same word used for Jesus' transfiguration (Matthew 17:2). And it's where we get our word "metamorphosis."

This is not incremental improvement. This is fundamental transformation.

The old man approach: Self-improvement. Work on yourself. Fix your flaws. Become a better version of yourself.

The new man reality: Metamorphosis. God transforms you from the inside out. You're becoming the full expression of who you already are in Christ.

A caterpillar doesn't self-improve its way into being a butterfly. It goes through metamorphosis—a complete transformation from one form to another.

You're not self-improving your way into Christ-likeness. You're being transformed—metamorphosed—into the full expression of the new creation you already are.

And this is happening day by day. Progressively. Continuously. By God's power, not your effort.

TRANSFORMATION VS. REFORMATION

This distinction is crucial:

Reformation = Trying to Fix the Old

Reformation takes what exists and attempts to fix it, improve it, make it better.

Reformation says:

- "The old man is broken but fixable"
- "With enough effort, the old nature can be rehabilitated"
- "Self-improvement can transform the flesh"
- "Behavior modification can change the heart"

The problem with reformation: The old man can't be reformed. He's dead. He's corrupted beyond repair. He's condemned, not improvable.

God doesn't reform the old man. He executed him and created a new man.

Transformation = Expressing the New

Transformation takes what IS and brings it into full expression.

Transformation says:

- "The new man IS righteous in Christ"
- "God is bringing that righteousness into visible expression"
- "The nature has changed; now behavior is catching up"
- "The heart is new; now actions are aligning"

The beauty of transformation: God is transforming the new creation you already are into the full, visible expression of Christ's image. Not creating newness. Manifesting newness that already exists.

Think about a photograph being developed:

In the old darkroom process, the image was already on the film the moment the shutter clicked. But it wasn't visible yet. The development process brought the image into visibility. It didn't create the image—it revealed it.

That's transformation. The image of Christ is already in you (you're a new creation). Now God is developing that image—bringing it into visibility, expression, manifestation.

Not creating it. Revealing it. Not making you into Christ's image. Making Christ's image in you visible.

BY BEHOLDING, NOT STRIVING

Here's how transformation actually happens:

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Transformed by beholding. Not by striving. Not by trying. By beholding.

You become like what you behold. You're transformed by what you gaze at, focus on, meditate on, treasure.

If you behold the law (trying to achieve righteousness through performance), you become anxious, condemned, exhausted—because the law can't transform you, only condemn you.

If you behold yourself (constantly self-examining, self-improving, self-monitoring), you become discouraged, because you'll always see the gap between who you are and who you think you should be.

If you behold Christ (gazing at His glory, meditating on who He is, treasuring Him above all), you are transformed into His image. Not by trying to copy Him. But by beholding Him and being changed from the inside out by the Spirit.

This is passive in one sense: You're not making the transformation happen. You're beholding, and the Spirit is transforming.

But it's active in another sense: You're choosing what to behold. You're directing your gaze. You're focusing your attention.

What are you beholding?

The dead man? (Constantly focused on the old man, trying to improve him, manage him, control him?) Then you'll stay stuck in that old pattern.

Yourself? (Constantly self-examining, self-evaluating, self-condemning?) Then you'll stay discouraged and exhausted.

Christ? (Gazing at His glory, meditating on His character, treasuring His love, resting in His finished work?) Then you'll be transformed. Not by trying to become like Him. But by beholding Him and being changed by the Spirit.

The method of transformation: Behold Christ.

The agent of transformation: The Spirit.

The result of transformation: You're changed into Christ's image, from glory to glory.

Not by striving. By beholding.

THE PROCESS: PROGRESSIVE, NOT INSTANT

The renewal is progressive. Day by day. From glory to glory. From one degree to another.

This means:

You're not instantly perfect at salvation. Yes, you're instantly justified, instantly regenerated, instantly made new. But you're not instantly mature, instantly transformed in all your behavior, instantly conformed to Christ's image in every area.

Position: instant. Experience: progressive.

You're growing. From glory to glory. You're already glorious (you're in Christ, you're new, you're righteous). And you're being made more glorious. From one degree of glory to another degree of glory.

Not from no-glory to some-glory. From glory to more glory.

You're developing. Day by day. Progressively. Continuously. The inner man is being renewed not all at once but day by day.

This is liberating:

You don't have to be instantly perfect. You're allowed to be in process.

You don't have to have it all together today. You're growing from glory to glory.

You don't have to beat yourself up for not being fully conformed to Christ's image yet. You're being transformed day by day.

But this is also sobering:

You can't excuse ongoing sin by saying "I'm in process." Yes, you're in process. But the process is moving in a direction—toward greater Christ-likeness, not toward continued bondage to sin.

You can't be passive about growth. You're cooperating with God's transforming work, not just waiting around for it to happen automatically.

The process is real. The growth is happening. The transformation is occurring.

But it's progressive, not instant. Day by day. From glory to glory. From one degree to another.

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

"Being transformed into the same image from glory to glory."

This phrase is crucial. **From** glory **to** glory.

Not from shame to glory. Not from failure to glory. Not from nothing to glory.

From glory to glory.

You're already glorious. You're in Christ. You're a new creation. You bear God's image. You're righteous, holy, beloved. That's glorious.

You're being made more glorious. The glory that's already yours in position is being manifested in experience. The glory that's already true is being made visible.

This is not:

- From disgrace to glory (you're not disgraced; you're in Christ)
- From worthlessness to glory (you're not worthless; you're beloved)
- From nothing to glory (you're not nothing; you're a new creation)

This is:

- From glory (position in Christ) to glory (manifestation of Christ)
- From glory (righteousness credited) to glory (righteousness expressed)

- From glory (identity given) to glory (identity lived)

Why does this matter?

Because if you think you're going from shame to glory, you'll operate from shame. You'll be shame-driven, shame-motivated, shame-fueled.

But if you understand you're going from glory to glory, you'll operate from glory. You'll live from your glorious identity in Christ. You'll express the glory that's already yours.

You're not climbing out of a pit. You're ascending from one mountain peak to a higher mountain peak. Both are glorious. One is more fully manifested glory than the other. But both are glory.

This changes everything about how you view the transformation process.

Not "I'm such a failure trying to become glorious."

But "I'm glorious in Christ, and that glory is being manifested more and more in my daily life."

From glory to glory. That's the direction. That's the process. That's the transformation.

FROM ONE DEGREE TO ANOTHER

"From one degree to another" emphasizes the progressive nature.

Not all at once. Transformation doesn't happen overnight. It's not instant maturity. It's progressive growth.

One degree at a time. Step by step. Layer by layer. Day by day. From one level to the next.

This means:

Be patient with the process. God is not in a hurry. He's more concerned with thorough transformation than quick results. He's working on your character, not just your comfort.

"God is more concerned about our character than our comfort," Paul Powell said. "His goal is not to pamper us physically but to perfect us spiritually."

God will use discomfort, trials, challenges, difficulties to transform your character. Not because He's mean. But because character formation requires pressure, and perfection requires process.

Be patient with yourself. You're not going to jump from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity overnight. You're growing. One degree at a time. From glory to glory. Day by day.

You don't condemn a child for not being an adult yet. Don't condemn yourself for not being fully mature yet. You're growing. The process is real. The transformation is happening.

Trust God's timing. He knows when to move you from one degree to the next. He knows what needs to happen in you before He can move you to the next level. He knows the right pace for your transformation.

Don't rush the process. Don't despise the slow growth. Don't demand instant results.

From one degree to another. Progressive. Steady. Real.

BY THE SPIRIT, NOT THE FLESH

"Just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

The transformation is by the Spirit. Not by the flesh. Not by self-effort. By the Spirit.

The flesh can't transform you. It can modify behavior temporarily. It can create external conformity. But it can't transform the heart.

The Spirit transforms you. From the inside out. By producing His fruit in you. By conforming you to Christ's image. By renewing you day by day.

How does the Spirit transform you?

Not by you trying harder. The Spirit doesn't need your self-effort. He needs your cooperation, but not your striving.

Not by you controlling yourself. The Spirit doesn't empower you to white-knuckle your way to holiness. He produces holiness in you as you yield to Him.

Not by you improving yourself. The Spirit doesn't help the old man become better. He manifests the new man's nature in your daily life.

The Spirit transforms you by:

His presence in you. He dwells in you. His presence is transformative. Just being in His presence, conscious of Him, yields to Him changes you.

His power through you. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). Not power to transform yourself. Power to live the transformed life He's producing in you.

His fruit in you. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These aren't produced by you. They're fruit of the Spirit in you.

His work in you. "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). The Spirit is working. You're yielding. He's transforming. You're cooperating.

By the Spirit. Not the flesh. Always by the Spirit.

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN DAILY LIFE

So practically, what does ongoing renewal look like?

It Looks Like Gradual Change, Not Instant Perfection

You're not going to wake up tomorrow completely transformed, never struggling with sin again, perfectly Christ-like in every area.

You're going to wake up tomorrow still you—but maybe a little more patient than yesterday. A little more loving. A little more like Christ.

Gradual. One degree at a time. From glory to glory. Day by day.

Don't despise the small changes. Celebrate them. God is working. The renewal is happening. Even if it feels slow.

It Looks Like Internal Change Producing External Change

You'll notice your desires changing. Your motivations shifting. Your affections being redirected.

Not because you're forcing yourself to want different things. But because the Spirit is renewing your inner man, and that internal renewal is affecting your external desires.

You'll find yourself wanting Christ more. Not forcing yourself to want Him. Actually wanting Him.

You'll find sin less appealing. Not because you're white-knuckling resistance. But because you're being satisfied by something better.

You'll find yourself loving people more naturally. Not performing love through gritted teeth. Actually loving from a changed heart.

Internal change producing external change. Inside out. That's how God works.

It Looks Like the Spirit Producing What You Couldn't

You'll be in situations where you respond differently than you used to. More patient than you naturally are. More kind than you would be on your own. More self-controlled than your willpower could produce.

And you'll realize: That wasn't me. That was the Spirit. I couldn't have done that in my own strength.

That's transformation. The Spirit producing in you what you couldn't produce yourself. Not helping you become more patient. Being patient through you because Christ, who is patient, lives in you.

It Looks Like Progress with Setbacks

You'll grow. You'll make progress. You'll see change.

And you'll also fail. You'll sin. You'll fall back into old patterns.

That doesn't mean the renewal isn't happening. It means you're in process. From glory to glory. One degree to another. Day by day.

Don't let setbacks convince you renewal isn't happening. Even in seasons of failure, God is working. Teaching you. Showing you your need for Him. Deepening your dependence. Producing character through trial.

The renewal continues even when you can't see it.

DON'T LOSE HEART

"Therefore we do not lose heart."

That's how Paul starts this verse. And it's how we should approach the ongoing renewal.

Don't lose heart when:

Progress feels slow. Day by day renewal doesn't always feel dramatic. But it's real. God is working even when you can't see it.

You fail. Your failures don't stop God's transforming work. If anything, they drive you to deeper dependence on Him—which is exactly what transformation requires.

The outer man is decaying. Your physical body is aging. Your energy is waning. Your health is declining. But the inner man—the real you—is being renewed day by day.

Circumstances are hard. God uses trials to transform you. "We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4).

You don't see immediate results. Transformation is often invisible in the moment but visible over time. Like a tree growing—you can't see it happening day to day, but over months and years, the growth is undeniable.

Don't lose heart. God is at work. The renewal is happening. The transformation is real.

You're going from glory to glory. From one degree to another. Day by day.

By beholding Christ, not by striving for Christ.

By the Spirit's power, not by the flesh's effort.

From the inside out, not from the outside in.

THE HOPE OF ONGOING RENEWAL

This is the hope: God is not finished with you.

Not because you're a failure and He's still trying to fix you. But because you're a glorious new creation, and He's manifesting that glory more and more in your daily life.

You're complete in Christ. Nothing needs to be added to your position. You're fully righteous, fully accepted, fully loved.

And you're being renewed day by day. Your experience is catching up to your position. Your life is increasingly reflecting your identity. Your behavior is aligning with your nature.

This is hope. Not "maybe someday I'll be good enough." But "God is transforming me into the full expression of who I already am in Christ."

The work is ongoing. Not because God is slow. But because transformation takes time, and God is thorough.

The outcome is certain. "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

God started the work. God will finish the work. Your job is to cooperate, yield, abide, behold Christ, and trust the process.

The glory is increasing. From glory to glory. Not from shame to glory. Not from failure to glory. From glory that's already yours to greater manifestation of that glory.

This is the ongoing renewal. And it's happening in you right now. Today. By the Spirit. From the inside out.

Don't lose heart. God is at work. And He finishes what He starts.

Application Questions

- 1. How does understanding that renewal happens FROM the inside out (not outside in) change your approach to transformation?**
- 2. Where are you still trying to reform the old man instead of trusting God to transform the new man?**
- 3. If transformation happens by beholding Christ (not by striving), what are you currently beholding? Is it Christ, yourself, or the old man?**
- 4. What does it mean to you that you're going FROM glory TO glory (not from shame to glory)? How does that change how you view yourself in the transformation process?**
- 5. Where are you being impatient with the "day by day" progressive nature of renewal? How can you trust God's timing while still cooperating with His work?**
- 6. If the Spirit is the one who transforms (not the flesh), where are you still trying to transform yourself through self-effort instead of yielding to the Spirit?**
- 7. What gradual changes have you seen in yourself that you've maybe dismissed as "not enough"? Can you celebrate those as evidence of God's renewing work?**
- 8. When you experience setbacks or failures, do you lose heart or do you trust that God's renewal is still happening even when you can't see it?**
- 9. What would it look like to cooperate with God's transforming work today without trying to generate the transformation yourself?**
- 10. If God is more concerned with your character than your comfort, what current difficulty might He be using to transform you? How can you yield to that instead of resist it?**

CHAPTER 19

When You Stop Dragging the Dead Man

"Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert." — Isaiah 43:18-19 (NASB)

Stop looking back.

That's God's command. Not His suggestion. His command.

"Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past."

Stop dwelling on what was. Stop obsessing over who you were. Stop defining yourself by the old man. Stop dragging around the corpse of your former identity.

Why? Because God is doing something new.

Not someday. Not eventually. Not after you get your act together.

Now. Present tense. Currently happening. Already springing forth.

"Behold, I will do something new, **now** it will spring forth."

But here's the question God asks: "Will you not be aware of it?"

Will you recognize what I'm doing? Will you see the new thing? Or will you be so focused on the old that you miss the new that's springing up right in front of you?

This is the tragedy: God is doing something new, and we're so busy dragging around the old that we don't notice.

He's making roadways in the wilderness of our lives. Creating rivers in the desert of our experience. Bringing forth new life, new identity, new creation.

But we're pondering the past. Calling to mind the former things. Obsessing over the old man. Dragging the corpse.

And we miss what God is doing right now.

When you finally stop dragging the dead man, everything changes.

Not because you've achieved something new. But because you're finally aware of—finally living from—the new thing God has already done.

The new creation you already are. The new life you already have. The new identity God has already given you.

When you stop dragging the corpse, you discover what's been there all along: life. Freedom. Joy. Rest. Authentic relationship. Overflow.

This is what happens when you stop dragging the dead man.

GOD'S COMMAND: STOP DWELLING ON THE OLD

"Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past."

This is a command. Not permission. Not suggestion. Command.

Stop calling to mind the former things. **Stop** pondering the past.

What are the "former things"?

In context, God is talking to Israel about their past—their slavery in Egypt, their wilderness wandering, their failures and rebellions. All the old stuff they kept rehearsing, reliving, obsessing over.

But for us, the "former things" include:

The old man. Who you were before Christ. Your old identity. Your old nature. Your old patterns. The dead man you keep resurrecting.

Past failures. The sins you committed. The ways you messed up. The times you fell short. The shame you're still carrying.

Old operating systems. Performance-based acceptance. Shame-driven motivation. Works-righteousness. Legalism. All the old ways of relating to God that belonged to the old man.

Former identity. "I'm just a sinner." "I'm broken." "I'm worthless." "I'm not enough." All the lies you believed about yourself before you knew who you are in Christ.

And God says: **Stop.**

Stop calling these things to mind. Stop pondering them. Stop dwelling on them. Stop defining yourself by them. Stop living from them.

Why?

Not because they didn't happen. Not because you should be in denial about your past. Not because you should ignore your history.

But because **God is doing something new**. And if you're still obsessing over the old, you'll miss the new.

You can't drag the corpse of the old man and walk in the freedom of the new man simultaneously. You can't ponder the past and live in the present at the same time. You can't call to mind the former things and behold what God is doing now.

You have to choose.

And God is commanding: Choose the new. Let go of the old. Stop dragging the dead man.

HIS PROMISE: HE'S DOING SOMETHING NEW

"Behold, I will do something new."

This is promise. God's guarantee. His commitment.

I will do something new. Not "I might" or "I could" or "maybe someday." **I will**.

And notice: **I will do**. God is the actor. He's doing it. Not you. Not your effort. Not your striving. Not your trying to become new.

God is doing something new. In you. For you. Through you.

What's the new thing?

New creation. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). You're not the old man anymore. You're new. That's the new thing God has done.

New covenant. Not the old covenant of law, performance, and works. But the new covenant of grace, faith, and finished work. "Behold, days are coming... when I will make a new covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31). God has done it. You're under the new covenant.

New identity. Not sinner, slave, condemned. But saint, son/daughter, beloved. Not performing for acceptance but living from acceptance. God has given you a new identity.

New life. Not the life of the flesh but the life of the Spirit. Not self-generated but Christ-indwelt. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). That's new life.

New way. Not the old way of dragging the corpse. But the new way of walking by the Spirit. Not striving but abiding. Not performing but receiving. Not earning but resting.

This is the new thing God is doing. And He's not doing it someday. He's doing it **now**.

IT'S SPRINGING FORTH NOW

"Now it will spring forth."

Now. Not eventually. Not after you prove yourself. Not when you're ready. **Now.**

Present tense. Currently happening. Already springing forth.

Like a seed that's been underground, hidden, invisible—and suddenly it breaks through the soil and springs forth. Visible. Real. Alive.

That's what's happening in you right now. The new creation you are—hidden with Christ in God, invisible to human eyes—is springing forth. Breaking through. Becoming visible in your life.

Not because you're making it happen. The seed doesn't make itself spring forth. It happens naturally, organically, inevitably when the conditions are right.

You're not making newness happen. God is. The new creation He made you is springing forth as you stop dragging the old and start living from the new.

"I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert."

These are impossible things. You don't find roads in wilderness. You don't find rivers in desert. It's unnatural. Unexpected. Miraculous.

That's what God does. He makes a way where there was no way. He brings life where there was death. He creates abundance where there was barrenness.

In your wilderness: God is making a roadway. A clear path. A direction. Where you saw only confusion, God is creating clarity. Where you saw only dead ends, God is opening a way forward.

In your desert: God is creating rivers. Life-giving, refreshing, sustaining water. Where you experienced dryness, God is bringing life. Where you knew exhaustion, God is providing refreshment.

And this is happening **now**. Not someday. Now.

The question is: Will you be aware of it?

WILL YOU RECOGNIZE IT?

"Will you not be aware of it?"

God asks this question because it's possible to miss what He's doing.

It's possible for God to be doing something new, creating roadways in your wilderness, bringing rivers to your desert—and for you to miss it entirely because you're too focused on the old.

You'll miss the new if:

You're still calling to mind the former things. Still obsessing over who you were. Still defining yourself by the old man.

You're still pondering the past. Still rehearsing your failures. Still living in shame over what you did before Christ.

You're still dragging the corpse. Still trying to rehabilitate the old man. Still operating from the old system of performance, shame, and striving.

You can't see the new while you're staring at the old.

You can't recognize the roadway God is making if you're walking the old paths.

You can't experience the rivers in the desert if you're still trudging through the wilderness dragging the dead man.

But when you let go of the old, you become aware of the new.

When you stop dragging the corpse, you notice what God is doing.

When you stop pondering the past, you see the present reality.

When you stop calling to mind the former things, you behold the new things springing forth.

And everything changes.

WHAT CHANGES WHEN YOU LET GO

So practically, specifically, what changes when you finally stop dragging the dead man?

1. Energy: No Longer Exhausted from Dragging a Corpse

Before (dragging the corpse): You're exhausted. Soul-tired. Drained. The constant effort of maintaining the old man's performance system, managing the flesh, trying to crucify what's already dead—it's depleting you.

Every spiritual activity feels like work. Prayer is duty. Bible reading is obligation. Service is exhausting. Obedience is draining.

You wake up tired and go to bed more tired. There's no rest. No refreshment. Just endless striving.

After (letting go): You have energy. Not superhuman strength. Not invincibility. But genuine, sustainable, Spirit-empowered energy.

Why? Because you're not wasting energy on the dead man anymore. You're not burning fuel trying to drag around what God has buried. You're not depleting yourself trying to generate what only God can give.

Spiritual activities become life-giving. Prayer is communion, not duty. Bible reading is receiving, not obligation. Service is overflow, not depletion. Obedience is joy, not drain.

You wake up with hope. You go to bed with peace. There's rest. Refreshment. Sustainable living.

The energy shift:

- From exhaustion to vitality
- From depletion to overflow
- From drivenness to purposefulness
- From burnout to sustainability

Not because you're trying harder. But because you're dragging less. You've let go of the corpse, and the energy it took to drag it is now available for living.

2. Freedom: Released from Shame and Performance

Before (dragging the corpse): You're in bondage. Enslaved to shame. Trapped in the performance treadmill. Bound by the constant need to prove yourself, earn your keep, justify your existence.

Shame defines you. "I'm not enough. I'm broken. I'm a failure." The internal voice never stops condemning, criticizing, condemning.

Performance drives you. "I have to do more. Be more. Achieve more." The treadmill never stops, and you can never get off because getting off means admitting you're not enough.

After (letting go): You're free. Actually, genuinely, experientially free.

Shame loses its power. When shame speaks, you respond: "That's not who I am anymore. I'm a new creation. I'm not agreeing with your lies."

Performance pressure releases. You're not performing for acceptance anymore. You're already accepted. You serve from gratitude, not from obligation. You obey from love, not from fear.

The freedom shift:

- From shame-bound to shame-free
- From performance-driven to identity-rooted
- From proving to resting
- From earning to receiving
- From fear-motivated to love-motivated

You're free to fail without losing your identity. Free to be imperfect without losing your acceptance. Free to rest without guilt. Free to be yourself without pretending.

This is the freedom Christ promised. And it's yours when you stop dragging the dead man.

3. Joy: Delight in Who You ARE Instead of Grief Over Who You Were

Before (dragging the corpse): You have no joy. Maybe fleeting happiness when things go well. Maybe temporary pleasure when you succeed. But no deep, abiding, unshakeable joy.

Why? Because you're focused on who you were. Grieving the old man. Mourning your failures. Obsessing over your past. Pondering the former things.

And grief over the past steals joy in the present. Shame about who you were kills delight in who you are.

After (letting go): You have joy. Real, deep, abiding joy. Not dependent on circumstances. Not conditional on performance. But rooted in identity, secured in Christ, flowing from the Spirit.

Why? Because you're focused on who you are. Delighting in your new identity. Celebrating what God has done. Beholding the new things springing forth.

And delight in who you are produces joy in how you live. Gratitude for what God has done fills your heart with gladness.

The joy shift:

- From grief to gladness
- From mourning to celebrating
- From shame to delight
- From regret to gratitude
- From sorrow to joy

This doesn't mean you're always happy. Joy isn't the same as happiness. You can have joy while experiencing hardship, trial, suffering. Because joy is rooted in who you are, not in what's happening to you.

And who you are is secure. You're beloved. You're new. You're accepted. You're His.

That's joy. And it's yours when you stop dragging the dead man.

4. Relationships: Authentic Instead of Performance-Based

Before (dragging the corpse): Your relationships are performance-based. You're managing your image. Controlling what people see. Hiding what you don't want them to know.

You can't be real because real means admitting imperfection. And imperfection threatens the performance you're trying to maintain.

So relationships stay surface. Safe. Controlled. Lonely.

You have acquaintances, but not friends. Connections, but not community. Conversations, but not intimacy.

After (letting go): Your relationships are authentic. You can be real because you're not performing anymore. You can be vulnerable because your acceptance doesn't depend on looking perfect.

You can admit struggles without fear of rejection. You can ask for help without shame. You can be yourself without pretending.

The relationship shift:

- From image management to authenticity
- From performance to vulnerability

- From control to openness
- From surface to depth
- From loneliness to connection

You still have boundaries. You still exercise wisdom about what to share and with whom. But the foundation has changed.

You're not hiding anymore. You're not pretending anymore. You're not performing anymore.

You're just... you. The real you. The new creation you. And that's enough.

And when you're authentic, you give others permission to be authentic too. Your freedom becomes contagious. Your transparency invites transparency. Your vulnerability creates safety.

Real relationships. Real community. Real connection.

That's what happens when you stop dragging the dead man.

5. Ministry: Overflow Instead of Obligation

Before (dragging the corpse): Ministry is obligation. Duty. Something you have to do to prove you're a good Christian, earn God's favor, or justify your existence.

You serve, but it drains you. You give, but you're running on empty. You minister, but you're exhausted.

Why? Because you're serving from obligation, not from overflow. You're giving what you don't have. You're pouring out from an empty well.

After (letting go): Ministry is overflow. Natural expression. The result of being filled, loved, and satisfied in Christ.

You serve, and it energizes you (even when it's hard). You give, and you're refreshed (even when it costs). You minister, and you experience joy (even when it's sacrificial).

Why? Because you're serving from overflow, not from obligation. You're giving from fullness, not from emptiness. You're pouring out what you've received.

The ministry shift:

- From duty to delight
- From obligation to overflow
- From earning to expressing

- From empty to full
- From draining to life-giving

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). And out of the abundance of being loved, accepted, and filled in Christ, ministry flows.

Not manufactured. Not forced. Not performed to prove something.

But natural. Organic. The overflow of what you've received.

You love because you've been loved. You serve because you've been served. You give because you've been given everything in Christ.

That's ministry from overflow. And it's sustainable, joyful, life-giving.

6. Rest: Sabbath Rest Instead of Frantic Striving

Before (dragging the corpse): You have no rest. Can't rest. Shouldn't rest. There's always more to do, more to prove, more to achieve.

Rest feels like laziness. Sabbath feels like wasted time. Stopping feels like falling behind.

So you strive. Constantly. Relentlessly. Frantically. And you wonder why you're exhausted.

After (letting go): You have rest. Real rest. Sabbath rest. The rest Jesus promised: "Come to Me... and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Rest is no longer laziness—it's trust. You're trusting that your worth isn't in your productivity. Your standing isn't in your performance. Your value isn't in your achievement.

Sabbath is no longer wasted time—it's worship. You're declaring that God is enough, Christ's work is finished, and you can rest in what He's accomplished.

Stopping is no longer falling behind—it's catching up. Catching up to the reality that you're already accepted, already loved, already complete in Christ.

The rest shift:

- From frantic to peaceful
- From striving to resting
- From anxious to trusting
- From driven to settled
- From exhausted to refreshed

This is the rest Jesus offers. The rest the new creation experiences. The rest that comes from living from finished work instead of working toward acceptance.

You can rest. You're allowed to rest. You need to rest.

And when you stop dragging the corpse, you finally can.

PRACTICAL OUTCOMES IN DAILY LIFE

Beyond these six major areas, there are practical, daily outcomes of letting go of the dead man:

You Stop Comparing Yourself to Others

Before: "Am I as spiritual as they are? Am I growing as fast? Am I serving as much? Why are they further along than me?"

After: "God is at work in me. I'm on my journey. Their journey is theirs, mine is mine. I'm celebrating their growth while trusting God with mine."

Comparison is the thief of joy. And it's rooted in performance-based identity. When you let go of the dead man's performance system, comparison loses its power.

You're not in competition. You're in Christ. And that's enough.

You Cease Measuring Your Spirituality

Before: "How many minutes did I pray? How many chapters did I read? How many times did I serve? How many sins did I avoid?"

After: "Am I abiding in Christ? Am I walking by the Spirit? Am I living from my identity? Am I responding to His love?"

You stop counting external metrics and start cultivating internal reality. Not because external disciplines don't matter, but because they're expressions of abiding, not measurements of acceptability.

You Rest in Finished Work

Before: "What do I still need to do? What haven't I achieved yet? What's left to accomplish before I'm acceptable?"

After: "It is finished. Christ accomplished everything. I'm accepted now. I'm living from His finished work, not working toward my acceptance."

This is the ultimate rest. The deep soul-rest that comes from knowing the work is done. Not by you. By Christ. And you're the beneficiary.

You Live from Love, Not Law

Before: "I have to obey or I'll be punished. I must perform or I'll be rejected. I need to keep the rules or I'll lose my standing."

After: "I obey because I'm loved. I serve because I've been served. I follow Christ because He's worth following, not because I'm afraid of consequences."

Law says, "Do this to be loved." Grace says, "You're loved; now live from that love."

When you let go of the dead man's law-based system, you discover the freedom of living from love.

BECOMING MORE FULLY ALIVE IN CHRIST

"The goal of the Christian life is not to become a better person, but to become more fully alive in Christ." — Dallas Willard

This is what happens when you stop dragging the dead man.

You don't become a better version of the old man. You become more fully alive as the new creation you are.

Not better. But more fully alive.

The old man approach: Self-improvement. Become a better person. Fix your flaws. Overcome your weaknesses.

The new man reality: Become more fully alive. Express who you already are. Live from your new identity. Manifest the life of Christ in you.

Better is about improvement. **Alive** is about life.

Better is about performance. **Alive** is about being.

Better is about becoming what you're not. **Alive** is about expressing what you are.

When you stop dragging the dead man, you become more fully alive.

More fully yourself (the new creation you, not the old man you).

More fully free (from shame, performance, striving, the treadmill).

More fully joyful (delighting in who you are instead of grieving who you were).

More fully connected (authentic relationships instead of performance-based ones).

More fully available (for ministry from overflow instead of obligation).

More fully rested (Sabbath rest instead of frantic striving).

This is life. Abundant life. The life Jesus came to give: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

Not abundant striving. Not abundant performing. Not abundant shame.

Abundant life.

And life is found by letting the dead stay dead and living as the alive-in-Christ person you are.

WILL YOU RECOGNIZE WHAT GOD IS DOING?

"Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it?"

God is doing something new in you. Right now. Today.

New creation. New identity. New life. New way. New covenant. New everything.

It's springing forth. Breaking through. Becoming visible in your life.

Will you recognize it?

Or will you miss it because you're too busy dragging around the old man?

Will you see the roadway God is making in your wilderness? Or will you keep trudging the same old paths?

Will you drink from the rivers God is creating in your desert? Or will you stay thirsty, convinced there's no water?

Will you experience the energy, freedom, joy, authentic relationships, ministry overflow, and rest that come from living as the new creation you are?

Or will you stay exhausted, bound, joyless, isolated, drained, and driven—dragging the corpse of the old man?

The choice is yours.

God has done the new thing. You are new. The old has passed away. The new has come.

Now: Stop calling to mind the former things. Stop pondering the past. Stop dragging the dead man.

And behold what God is doing. Recognize the new. Live from your new identity. Walk in your new life.

Everything changes when you stop dragging the dead man.

Not because you've achieved something. But because you've finally let go of what was killing you and received what gives you life.

Stop dragging the corpse.

Start living as the new creation you are.

And discover what God has been doing all along—making all things new, including you.

Application Questions

- 1. What "former things" are you still calling to mind? What aspects of the old man or old identity are you still pondering instead of letting go?**
- 2. Can you identify the "new thing" God is doing in your life right now? What's springing forth that you might be missing because you're focused on the old?**
- 3. Looking at the six changes (energy, freedom, joy, relationships, ministry, rest), which one do you most long for? What's preventing you from experiencing it?**
- 4. How would your daily life change if you stopped comparing yourself to others and measuring your spirituality by external metrics?**
- 5. What does it mean practically for you to "rest in finished work" instead of working toward acceptance?**
- 6. In what area of your life are you still living from law (obligation, fear, duty) instead of from love (gratitude, joy, response)?**
- 7. If becoming more fully alive in Christ (not becoming a better person) is the goal, what does "more fully alive" look like for you?**
- 8. Where is God making "a roadway in the wilderness" of your life right now? Can you see it? What would it look like to walk on that road instead of the old paths?**
- 9. What would change in your relationships if you stopped performing and started being authentic? Who needs to see the real you?**

10. What's one specific, practical step you can take today to stop dragging the dead man and start living from your new identity?

CONCLUSION: BURIAL AND RESURRECTION

The Final Act: Leaving the Tomb Empty

"and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen.'"
— Luke 24:5-6 (NASB)

Picture the scene:

Early morning. First day of the week. The sun barely breaking the horizon. Three women walking toward a tomb, carrying spices to anoint a dead body.

They're going to visit the corpse. To pay their respects. To perform the burial rituals they didn't have time to complete before the Sabbath.

They expect to find Jesus where they left Him: dead. In the tomb. Finished.

But when they arrive, the tomb is empty. The stone is rolled away. The body is gone.

And two men in dazzling clothing—angels—ask them the most penetrating question in all of Scripture:

"Why do you seek the living One among the dead?"

Why are you looking for life in a tomb? Why are you expecting to find the Living One among corpses? Why are you visiting death when life has broken free?

And then the announcement that changed everything:

"He is not here, but He has risen."

This is your story too.

You've been going to the tomb. Visiting the corpse. Looking for life among the dead.

You've been carrying spices to anoint the old man. Performing rituals over what God has buried. Expecting to find identity, worth, righteousness, transformation in the dead man you used to be.

You've been seeking the living among the dead.

Trying to improve the old man. Trying to rehabilitate the old nature. Trying to resurrect what Christ crucified. Trying to drag around the corpse, hoping you can somehow extract life from death.

And you're exhausted. Soul-tired. Weary from the burden. Heavy-laden from the weight.

Because you can't find life in a tomb. You can't find victory in the old man. You can't find freedom by dragging around the dead.

But today—right now, in this moment—the same question is being asked of you:

"Why do you seek the living One among the dead?"

Why are you still trying to find life in the old man? Why are you still looking for transformation in what God has crucified? Why are you still dragging around the corpse when resurrection life is available?

And the same announcement that changed the women at the tomb is being proclaimed to you:

"He is not here, but He has risen."

Jesus is not in the tomb. He's risen. Alive. Victorious.

And you—IN Him—have risen too.

THE QUESTION FOR US

"Why do you seek the living One among the dead?"

This question echoes through the centuries and lands directly in your life right now.

Why are you seeking life among the dead?

Why are you trying to find spiritual vitality by managing the old man?

Why are you trying to discover freedom by controlling the flesh?

Why are you attempting to experience transformation by improving what God has condemned?

Why are you looking for victory in the old man?

Why do you think if you can just crucify the flesh one more time, you'll finally be free?

Why do you believe if you can just die to yourself enough, you'll finally live?

Why are you convinced that managing the dead man is the pathway to victory when God says the dead man is... dead?

Why are you trying to resurrect what Christ has crucified?

Why do you keep going back to the tomb of your old identity?

Why do you keep performing rituals over what God has buried?

Why do you keep trying to bring back to life what God executed at the cross?

The answer? Because we don't really believe it's done.

We don't truly believe the old man is dead. We think he's mostly dead. Severely wounded. Significantly weakened. But not actually, completely, finally dead.

We don't really believe we're new. We think we're becoming new. Working toward newness. Hopefully new someday. But not actually, completely, presently new.

We don't fully trust that resurrection life is ours right now. We think it's something we're working toward. Something we'll achieve if we're faithful enough. Something for the future, not the present.

So we keep going to the tomb. Keep visiting the corpse. Keep seeking the living among the dead.

But the angels' question exposes the futility: "**Why?**"

Why are you doing this? Don't you know He's risen? Don't you know you've risen IN Him? Don't you know the tomb is empty and life is available?

THE ANNOUNCEMENT: HE HAS RISEN

"He is not here, but He has risen."

This is the announcement that changed history. The declaration that transformed everything. The proclamation that split time in two.

He has risen.

Not "He might rise." Not "He could rise if conditions are right." Not "He will rise someday."

Has risen. Past tense. Done. Accomplished. Finished.

Jesus is not in the tomb. Death could not hold Him. The grave could not keep Him. Hell could not defeat Him.

He has risen. Victorious. Alive. Triumphant.

And you—IN Him—have risen too.

"Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

As Christ was raised, **so we too** might walk in newness of life.

You have been raised with Christ. "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

Past tense. Done. Accomplished. You **have been** raised. Not "will be raised someday." Not "are trying to be raised." **Have been raised.**

You are alive. "Even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5).

Made us alive. Past tense. You're not becoming alive. You're not working toward aliveness. You **ARE** alive. In Christ. Now. Today.

The tomb of your old identity is empty. The old man you were—dead, buried, gone. The new creation you are—alive, risen, real.

Stop going to the tomb expecting to find yourself there. You're not there. You've risen with Christ.

The old man is not here. He has been crucified. Buried. Left in the tomb.

But you—the new creation you—has risen.

THE INVITATION: STOP SEEKING LIFE AMONG THE DEAD

Based on this reality—that Christ has risen and you have risen IN Him—here is the invitation:

Stop Visiting the Tomb of Your Old Identity

You don't live at the graveyard anymore. Stop making pilgrimages to the tomb of who you used to be.

Stop defining yourself by your past. Stop introducing yourself by your former sins. Stop identifying with the old man who's dead and buried.

"I used to be..." Yes. Used to be. Past tense. But you're not that anymore.

"I've always struggled with..." Maybe you have. But the one who struggled was the old man. And he's dead. You're new.

"I'm just a sinner who..." No. You're a saint who sometimes sins. Your identity is not sinner. Your identity is saint, righteous, new creation, beloved child of God.

The tomb of your old identity is empty. Stop visiting it. Stop living there. Stop identifying with what's dead.

You've risen. Live like it.

Stop Mourning What God Has Buried

The women came to the tomb to mourn. To grieve. To honor the dead.

And you've been mourning the old man. Grieving over him. Maybe even honoring him in strange ways—"He was such a good worker. He tried so hard. He was so committed to earning his righteousness."

Stop.

God didn't bury the old man so you could spend your life mourning him. He buried the old man so you could be free from him.

You don't honor God by grieving over what He's destroyed. You honor God by celebrating what He's created—the new you.

"Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past" (Isaiah 43:18).

Stop mourning. Start celebrating. What God has buried, let it stay buried.

Stop Trying to Resurrect What Christ Has Crucified

This is the heart of the issue: spiritual necromancy. Trying to bring back what God has killed.

Every time you try to crucify yourself daily, you're resurrecting the old man so you can kill him again.

Every time you try to die to self, you're giving life to what's already dead.

Every time you try to improve the old man, manage the flesh, or rehabilitate the old nature, you're attempting resurrection of what Christ crucified.

Stop.

God didn't crucify the old man so you could resurrect him. He crucified the old man so you could be free from him forever.

Let what Christ crucified stay crucified. Let what God buried stay buried. Let the dead man stay dead.

Start Living from Your Resurrection Life

You've risen with Christ. You have resurrection life. Right now. Today. In this moment.

So live from it.

Live from your new identity. Live from your new nature. Live from the resurrection power that's in you because Christ is in you.

Stop dragging the corpse. Start walking in newness of life.

Stop trying to become what you already are. Start expressing what you already possess.

Stop working toward acceptance. Start living from acceptance.

Stop striving for righteousness. Start resting in the righteousness that's yours in Christ.

Stop performing for approval. Start serving from overflow of being approved.

You've risen with Christ. Now walk like it. Live like it. Be like it.

Not to become risen. But because you ARE risen.

THE CHALLENGE: WILL YOU FINALLY QUIT DRAGGING AROUND A DEAD MAN?

This entire book has been leading to this moment. This question. This challenge.

Will you finally quit dragging around the dead man?

Will you stop the exhausting effort to resurrect, manage, improve, and control what God has crucified and buried?

Will you stop seeking life among the dead—trying to find transformation, freedom, victory in the old man who no longer exists?

Will you stop visiting the tomb of your old identity, mourning what God has buried, honoring what God has destroyed?

Will you finally—completely, totally, absolutely—let go of the corpse?

This is the moment of decision.

You can keep doing what you've been doing. Keep dragging the dead man. Keep trying to improve him. Keep practicing spiritual necromancy. Keep exhausting yourself with the burden of maintaining a dead identity.

Or you can drop the corpse. Let go of the old man. Stop seeking life among the dead. And start living from the resurrection life that's already yours in Christ.

The choice is yours.

But understand what's at stake:

If you keep dragging the dead man:

- You'll stay exhausted from the burden
- You'll stay bound by shame and performance
- You'll stay anxious about your standing
- You'll stay joyless in your striving
- You'll stay isolated in your performance
- You'll stay depleted in your service
- You'll stay restless in your soul

If you let go of the dead man:

- You'll experience the energy of living without the burden
- You'll discover the freedom of grace and identity
- You'll rest in your secure standing in Christ
- You'll find joy in who you are, not grief over who you were
- You'll build authentic relationships without performance
- You'll serve from overflow, not obligation
- You'll find rest for your souls

Will you finally quit dragging around the dead man?

This is the challenge. The invitation. The call.

Let go. Release. Drop the corpse. Stop the funeral procession. Leave the tomb empty.

And start living—really, fully, abundantly living—from your resurrection life in Christ.

THE CELEBRATION: THE OLD HAS PASSED AWAY

"Easter says you can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there." — Clarence W. Hall

They tried to keep Jesus in the grave. Sealed the tomb. Posted guards. Did everything they could to keep death's hold.

But truth doesn't stay buried. Life doesn't stay dead. Resurrection power breaks through.

Easter celebrates this reality: What was dead is now alive. What was buried has risen. What was finished has begun again.

And this is your story too.

They tried to keep you in the grave of sin, shame, condemnation, death. The law sealed the tomb. Your failures posted guards. Everything conspired to keep you dead and buried.

But truth doesn't stay buried. Life doesn't stay dead. Resurrection power broke through.

And you—who were dead in trespasses and sins—have been made alive together with Christ.

This is cause for celebration.

Not mourning. Not grieving. Not somber funeral processions. **Celebration.**

The old has passed away. The new has come. Death has been swallowed up in victory. The sting of death has been removed. The power of sin has been broken.

You are not who you were.

The old man—crucified. The old nature—dead. The old identity—buried. The old covenant—fulfilled. The old way—finished.

Gone. Passed away. No longer operative. No longer your reality.

You are who He says you are.

New creation. New nature. New identity. New covenant. New way.

Present. Real. Currently true. Your actual reality.

The old man is dead. Long live the new creation.

This is not a funeral. This is a resurrection celebration.

We're not mourning the death of the old man. We're celebrating the life of the new creation.

We're not grieving what was. We're rejoicing in what is.

We're not visiting tombs. We're living from resurrection.

It's time to stop the funeral procession and start the resurrection celebration.

Put away the mourning clothes. Stop carrying the spices for anointing the dead. Leave the tomb empty.

And start celebrating:

- You're alive in Christ
- You're free from the law
- You're dead to sin
- You're righteous in Him
- You're a new creation
- You're beloved of God
- You're complete in Christ
- You have resurrection life

This is resurrection Sunday every day.

Not just once a year. Every single day. Because every day you get to live from the reality that you've died with Christ, been buried with Christ, and been raised with Christ to newness of life.

Every day is resurrection day when you stop dragging the dead man and start living from your new identity.

THE FINAL WORD: IT IS FINISHED

At the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

The work of your salvation—finished. The condemnation of your sin—finished. The death of your old man—finished. The fulfillment of the law—finished. The defeat of death—finished. The victory over sin—finished.

Finished.

And three days later, the tomb was empty. Death was defeated. Resurrection life broke forth.

This is your reality.

Your old man's death—finished. Your new creation—complete. Your righteousness in Christ—accomplished. Your acceptance by the Father—secured. Your standing before God—established. Your identity—settled.

Finished.

Nothing left for you to do to achieve it. Nothing left for you to accomplish to earn it. Nothing left for you to perform to maintain it.

It is finished.

Now live from what's finished.

Not working toward. Living from.

Not striving to achieve. Resting in what's accomplished.

Not dragging the dead man. Walking in newness of life.

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." — 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB)

This is the final word. The settled truth. The non-negotiable reality.

If anyone is in Christ — Are you in Christ? Then this is for you. This is about you. This is your identity.

He is a new creature — Not becoming. Not working toward. **IS.** Present tense. Current reality. You ARE new.

The old things passed away — Past tense. Done. Gone. Finished. The old man, the old nature, the old identity—passed away. Not passing away. Passed away.

Behold, new things have come — Present perfect tense. They came, and they're here now. New creation, new nature, new identity, new life—have come. Present. Real. Yours.

This is the gospel truth about you.

You are not the old man trying to become new. You are the new creation learning to live from your newness.

You are not a sinner hoping to someday be righteous. You are righteous in Christ, learning to live from your righteousness.

You are not dead trying to become alive. You are alive in Christ, learning to walk in newness of life.

The old has passed away. The new has come.

And it's time—past time—to stop dragging around the dead man and start living as the new creation you are.

QUIT DRAGGING AROUND THE DEAD MAN

That's it. That's the message. That's the call.

Quit dragging around the dead man.

Stop trying to resurrect what Christ crucified.

Stop seeking life among the dead.

Stop visiting the tomb of your old identity.

Stop mourning what God buried.

Stop the funeral procession.

And start living.

Start living from your new identity.

Start living from your resurrection life.

Start living from your righteousness in Christ.

Start living from your acceptance by the Father.

Start living from the finished work of Jesus.

Start living as the new creation you are.

You are not who you were.

You are who He says you are.

The old man is dead.

Long live the new creation.

The tomb is empty.

Resurrection life is yours.

It is finished.

Now live from what's finished.

GO AND LIVE

The women at the tomb received a command after the announcement: "Go" (Matthew 28:7).

Don't stay at the tomb. Don't linger at the grave. Don't set up camp at the burial site.

Go.

Go and live. Go and tell. Go and celebrate. Go and walk in newness of life.

That's the command to you too: Go.

Go from this book into your life and actually live from what you've learned.

Go from understanding these truths to applying these truths.

Go from knowing you're new to living as though you're new.

Go from believing the old man is dead to actually leaving him dead.

Go and quit dragging around the dead man.

Starting today. Starting now. Starting this moment.

Let go of the corpse. Walk away from the tomb. Leave the dead man buried.

And walk—no, run—into the freedom, joy, rest, and abundant life that's yours in Christ.

You're free.

Free from the old man's performance system.

Free from shame's condemnation.

Free from law's demands.

Free from sin's dominion.

Free from death's grip.

You're alive.

Alive in Christ.

Alive to God.

Alive with resurrection power.

Alive with new identity.

Alive with abundant life.

You're new.

New creation.

New nature.

New identity.

New life.

New everything.

Now go live like it.

Stop dragging the dead man.

Start living as the new creation.

And experience the life Christ died to give you and rose to secure for you—the life that's been yours all along, just waiting for you to finally, completely, totally let go of the corpse and receive it.

The tomb is empty.

You have risen.

Now go and live.

"Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen."

He has risen.

And you—in Him—have risen too.

It's time to leave the tomb empty and live from resurrection life.

Quit dragging around the dead man.

The old has passed away.

Behold, new things have come.

You are new.

Now live like it.

AMEN.

Application Questions for Conclusion

- 1. The angel's question to the women was "Why do you seek the living One among the dead?" How would you answer that question about your own life? Where are you still seeking life in the dead man?**
- 2. If you truly believed "the old has passed away; the new has come," what would change about how you live today?**
- 3. What does it mean practically for you to "stop visiting the tomb of your old identity"? What old identities do you keep returning to?**
- 4. Are you living in a funeral procession (mourning the old man) or a resurrection celebration (rejoicing in the new creation)? What needs to change?**
- 5. If Jesus' words "It is finished" apply to your old man's death and your new creation, what are you still trying to finish that's already done?**
- 6. What specific burden of the dead man are you finally ready to drop after reading this book? What's keeping you from dropping it right now?**
- 7. How would your life change if you really, truly, completely believed you are who God says you are—not who you feel like or who you used to be?**
- 8. The women were told "Go" after the resurrection announcement. Where is God calling you to "go" now that you understand you're new? What's your next step?**
- 9. Write your own declaration: "I am not _____ (old identity). I am _____ (new identity in Christ)." What changes when you speak this out loud?**
- 10. Will you finally quit dragging around the dead man? If yes, what does that commitment look like starting today? If not, what's holding you back?**

The old man is dead. Long live the new creation. Now go and live from resurrection life.

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." — 2 Corinthians 5:17

THE END

(But really, this is just the beginning.)