

Real Change – New Life in Christ

10/13/24

For a moment, let's go back to when you were younger. Do you remember the first time you used a landline phone and what did that phone look like? Do you remember your first cell phone and what did that look like? Phones today have totally changed from the first phones we used to use. Remember your first car? What accessories did it have if any? Did it have a FM and AM radio? Did it even have power windows or did you have to crank it? Look how vehicles have totally changed from earlier vehicles. Look at your TV. Remember the day where you had to get up and walk over to turn a knob to get one of the 12 channels. Now, their thin and light and you can get hundreds of channels. Remember when you used to listen to music from those big cassettes called 8 - tracks. Do you remember your first push mower or how about your first microwave? Do you remember your first computer and how big the monitor was? You go to a dentist and now they want you to use an electric tooth brush instead of a regular tooth brush. Remember how it used to be when you went to a doctor or maybe they came to you. We can go on and on about how things have totally changed over the years. Sometimes we long for the so called "good old days". How many of you would give up your heated seats in your vehicle of today to go back to your first vehicle without heated seats? But yet, that first vehicle might be worth a lot of money in today's world. We don't mind change as long as it benefits us. We get a little upset every time we have to get a new cell phone because it's different from the last and we have to learn the new setup. How about being a Christian? Do we really have to change to be a Christian? If so, how much change do we have to put up with or can we straddle the fence and live for Christ while enjoying the things of this world. Apostle Paul dealt with this issue during his day and he addresses this issue to the followers of Jesus in Rome. In Paul's letter to Rome, we have been dealing with Paul's teachings to the Christians in Rome that was inspired through the working of the Holy Spirit. We've talked about God's righteousness and how we are to be righteous as well. We've talked about how we are a servant to Jesus and how we are to have faith in Jesus and how He makes us justified before God because of Jesus' blood was shed on the cross to cover those sins. So, Paul has been going over the basic theology the Church in Rome needed to have a right relationship with the Lord. Paul, like he always does, will continue to dig deeper into this relationship we are to have with the Trinity – God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. So, let's continue to explore this type of relationship we are to have

with the Lord. Let's turn to Romans 5: 20 – 6: 14 where Paul states this, “²⁰ The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ

6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,^{6a} that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

(Biblegateway)

When you go back to when you allowed Jesus into your heart and mind, you should have realized at that time how sinful you were compared to the holiness and righteousness of the Lord. Paul is reminding the Christians of this by telling them the law showed their sin as it was. So, Paul is telling us here at the end of chapter 5 that even if your list of sin seems endless, God's grace has become more abundant. Once we turn all that sin over to Jesus, His blood covers that sin so we can have a right standing before God because the blockade of sin had kept us from

having a relationship with God. Now we have been justified before God through Jesus Christ. In other words, the old self is gone and a total change has happened within us.

In chapter 6, Paul moves into the next stage in our relationship with the Lord. As usual, there were some false teaching going around that if one becomes a follower of Jesus, you can still live out your old life style as well. This teaching has never gotten old. It's still being taught today as it was during Paul's day. So, Paul clarifies this in chapter 6. Paul starts by saying some may say that if one keeps sinning against God, God's grace increases to cover that sin. Paul quickly destroys that false teaching by stating in verse 2 that by no means are we to continue to willfully sin. In fact, Paul tells us that we have "died" to sin or "dead" to sin. Paul uses the example of baptism to explain the change. Baptism is not only a means of grace, but it is the show of change in one's life. I like this from a commentary on baptism, "Baptism (particularly by immersion) offers a wonderful picture of the spiritual death to self and resurrection to new life involved in salvation (Wesley Bible Curriculum)". Our old sinful self is dunked into the water and when we rise back up from the water, we show we have become a new person in Christ Jesus. Baptism doesn't save you; it is a sacrament signifying acceptance of the benefits of salvation through Jesus. It shows the old has been buried to death and we have been raised just as Jesus was raised to new life. Paul uses baptism as an example of the new life we now have in Jesus – the old life has been put to death. In fact, Paul says in verse 6 that the old self has been crucified with Jesus so we are no longer slaves to sin like we were before our encounter with Jesus. So, we are now to live a new life or walk in a newness of life. Paul also states that anyone who has died has been set free from sin (verse 7). Not only are we alive, but we are alive to God in Christ Jesus (verse 11). Paul spends a lot of time here going over how we are made alive through Jesus or we can also say made anew. If you call yourself a Christian, have you been made new or alive in God through Jesus? It's easy to put a title over our head that says we are a Christian. However, there is only one way to receive that title and that is to receive a new life through the way of Jesus Christ. A new life where our past sins are forgiven and we now enjoy a new relationship with Jesus. Paul is making sure that we understand that we don't want to go back to the way we were before knowing Jesus. We want nothing to do with that old life of sin. In fact, Paul tells us in verse 12 and 13 that

we no longer allow sin to reign in our bodies. Plus, we do not offer “any” part of ourselves to sin as an instrument of wickedness for sin is no longer our master. We are now slaves to Jesus Christ who died for us.

In verse 18 of chapter 6, we read, “You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (NIV). If you remember at the very beginning of Romans, Paul calls himself a slave/servant to Jesus Christ. Now, he is using this term to describe our relationship with Jesus. This new life now contains wanting to live out the righteousness of God. That righteousness (God’s standards) fills us and there should be no room for wanting to sin. We have become slave/servant to Jesus Christ. This is the newness that we now live out through Jesus Christ. We now know the penalty for sin. Paul states this in verse 23 of chapter 6, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV).” This newness of life leads to eternal life through Jesus. If we go back to wanting to live in sin, the wages of sin is death – spiritual death. Paul didn’t want the people to go back to the old way of life, but to embrace the totally new change of life that is found only through Jesus.

Why do we want to live out this new life? Why don’t we want to go back to our old sinful lifestyle? We can find that answer in 2 Corinthians 5: 14 where we read this, “Whatever we do, it is because Christ’s love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for everyone, we also believe that we have all died to the old life we used to live. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves. Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them. So we have stopped evaluating others by what the world thinks about them. Once I mistakenly thought of Christ that way, as though he were merely a human being. How differently I think about him now! What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun! (NLT, 1840)” Since we read again in Scripture that our past life is to die and we are to live a new life, it must be important. Paul is telling another Church that we are to live out this new life in Jesus because we do it out of love for Him. Remember the other week; we had talked about how loving Jesus is an important ingredient in “faith” in Jesus. Not only are we to believe and trust in Jesus, we are to love Him. Believe, trust, and love is all part of faith. So, we want to live out this new life in Jesus out of love for Jesus because now His love should be taking over our life.

We no longer live to please ourselves. In this new life, we want to please the Lord first, then we start loving people in the right way as well. In fact, Paul tells us that the love of Christ will help us to stop evaluating others by what the world thinks about them. In other words, stop allowing social media and the news networks to tell you who to hate and who to like. We no longer follow the old self, but now we live out this new life of love. As my faith grows in Christ, the more I find my past life as revolting to me.

Think of a caterpillar for a moment. During the Spring and early Summer, they come falling from the trees or they hang by a web. When they get on us, we brush them off in disgust. Caterpillars may be colorful, but all they are is a bigger worm. Caterpillars don't stay a caterpillar. They usually form this case around them and after a few days, they break out of that case and then they are a beautiful butterfly. Now, when they land on us, we enjoy looking at them and they are no longer revolting to us. Now, think about this, have you ever seen a butterfly go back to being a caterpillar? They live out their new life till they die. They don't want to go back to the old life where they can't fly and are always getting run over on the roadway. Out of love for Jesus, we should want to do everything we can through His Spirit to keep from going back to the life of sin. We should embrace this new life in Jesus and we should want to live out His righteousness and holiness daily because of our love for Him. If Paul was alive on this earth today, I believe he would be upset by how many Christians today in America have allowed the culture to reshape their hearts and mind back to the old ways. The old ways are not always good. We can tell if we are still living out this new life by how much fruit of love is being produced for the Lord and for the people around us. If we're starting to hate people and more people around us, we have to ask ourselves if we're going back to the old dead self. Since Jesus died on the cross so we can enjoy this new life, let's allow His Spirit to help us to be fully transformed in this new life and to enjoy it.

Think about this:" We're called to reflect on what we're truly pursuing in life (ChatGPT)

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996

Wesley Bible Curriculum. Wesleyan Publishing House: Fishers, 2024