

Living Out the New Life

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- [0:00] Well, the start of this year was a big change for me. I started a new job. And as some of you may know, I took a year off working as a lawyer to start a new job as a ministry apprentice at this church.
- So I've been at Holy Trinity for about six months now. And probably the biggest adjustment I've had to make in my time here is getting used to a completely new lifestyle.
- So for instance, Sunday is no longer my rest day, but now it's probably the most hectic day of the week for me. Mondays are no longer the start of the grind of the work week, but now it's my happy day.
- It's my day off. And night times are no longer my TV time, but nights are now full of church activities and preparation. So now what if in my role as a ministry apprentice, I started showing up in the city for work on Monday at nine o'clock in the morning?
- What if I slept till midday on Sundays? What if I started watching TV during my Bible study on Wednesday nights? Wouldn't go down too well, would it?
- [1:09] See, no, as part of my change in role, my whole life needs to change accordingly. No longer can I live according to my old ways as a boring old tax lawyer, but now I have to adjust to this new life of danger as a ministry apprentice.
- So you see, my behavior needs to match my new role. And that means giving up some stuff that I used to do. And that means doing some new things that I didn't used to do. And that's just a change in job title.
- But in our passage today, we're reminded, aren't we, that we too have had a change, not in job title, but in life. And we're going to see how our new life in Christ should lead us to a dramatic change in lifestyle.
- So Paul is going to exhort us today with three things. Point one, to live out the new life. Point two, to put to death our old ways. And point three, to put on the new ways.
- So point one, living out the new life. I don't know if you realize this, but did you know that you have all been raised from the dead, that you have died, and that you have been spiritually raised from the dead?
- [2:21] Something that I don't really think about, but have a look at how verse one begins of chapter three. Paul writes, Since then you have been raised with Christ.
- We have been raised with Christ. Past tense. What does this mean? Well, flip back with me to chapter two, verse 11, just a page back in the Bibles.
- And you'll see in chapter two, verse 11, that Paul writes, Your whole self, ruled by the flesh, was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him, through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.
- Paul's point here is that now we have a new life in Christ. See, we used to be ruled by our flesh, our sinful nature, and it was this sinful nature which had control over all our thoughts, over all our desires, all of our decisions.

I remember before I was a Christian, it was just natural for me to live according to the flesh. And I remember my first job out of uni, suddenly I was starting to come into all this money I never had before.

- [3 : 34] And what we would do, me and my friend, we would just blow all of our money on really expensive pairs of jeans, which is a bit strange. But see, we were so controlled by our materialism, by our earthly natures, that you know what, it just seemed right to drop 250 bucks on a pair of jeans.

But you see, because of Jesus' death on the cross for us, now we have been buried with Christ. And so we now have died with him to our flesh.

Because now we have received a completely new life in Jesus. No longer are we ruled by our old desires, our old impulses. And this is what Paul's saying here. He's saying that when we become Christians, we have new spiritual life.

So now if you turn back to chapter 3, verse 1, you'll see that Paul is saying the same thing. He's saying that we have been raised with Christ. We have a new life in him.

And verse 3 says that now we are, our lives are hidden or tied up with Christ in God. See, there's a real sense now that, in which we are seated with Christ in heaven right now, spiritually.

- [4 : 43] And we are so secure in Christ now, that our new lives are now hidden with him in heaven. There's nothing anyone can do to change that reality.

And one day we know that that spiritual reality will become physical when, in verse 4, Christ appears again in glory. So here's Paul's point. Because of this incredible gift of new life, we are now to set our hearts, we are to set our minds on Christ and this new life.

Have a look at verse 2. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your hearts on things above, not on earthly things.

You may remember from last week that Paul said that since we have received Christ as Lord, now we should continue walking in him, rooted and built up in love. Well, Paul's saying the same thing here.

He's saying, now you have received this new life in Christ, now you have been spiritually raised with him, well, live it out. Live out that reality. How?

- [5 : 48] By setting our hearts and our minds on things above, where Christ is. I don't know if you're like me, but I'm a very impressionable person. So it's very easy for me to get excited about things.

I remember one year, there was this golf tournament in Melbourne, and for some reason I just really loved golf, so I went along, and there was this guy called Tiger Woods that was playing.

You may have heard of him. And amazingly, I don't know how this happened, but we managed to get his autograph, which was pretty great. And I remember, I was so excited that I tried to learn everything about Tiger Woods after that.

I read his biography, I tried to copy his golf swing, which is impossible. I tried to dress like him. I even bought a Tiger Woods hat, bought a Tiger Woods skivvy, which is a bit weird.

See, getting his autograph was like the greatest thing that has ever happened to me. The greatest thing that ever happened to me in my life so far. And I think that's what it means to set our hearts and our minds on Christ.

- [6 : 52] To be so consumed by Jesus in every way. To be so blown away by what it means to have received a new life in him that the very orientation of your life changes.

And when Paul uses the term heart here, he means that the very core of your being, your very identity, needs to be set now on Christ. And we're also to set our minds on Christ, aren't we?

We are to fill our thoughts with Jesus. Our minds are to be so consumed by his words that we continually meditate and reflect on who he is and what he's done for us in giving us new life.

Notice here that it starts with the head and the heart, doesn't it? See, how we live is always flowing out of how we think and how we feel, isn't it? How we think and feel seems to always shape how we live.

So living out our new life means to firstly set our hearts and our minds on Christ and our behaviour will follow from that. So now Paul's going to give us some practical examples of how we can live out this new life.

[8 : 02] And that means, point two, getting rid of our old ways. Have a look at verse five. Put to death, therefore, what belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived. So because of our new life in Christ now, we should have no longer any association with our old life.

And what Paul is saying here, he's saying we need to deal violently with our sin, with our old nature. We need to put it to death because truth is, we have already died to it.

But the other reason we need to be violent with how we deal with our sin is because the wrath of God is coming for these things. See, these things actually threaten to take our life.

This is life and death that we're talking about. I don't know about you, but I hate spiders. I hate them. I think I might even have an irrational fear of spiders.

[9 : 09] Every time I see one in my bedroom, I cannot sleep while I know it's still there. So I'll find that thing, I'll hunt it down, I will spray so much more teen on that thing until it turns white, then I'll step on it, then I'll wait 15 minutes just to see if it's not faking its death, then I'll flush it down the toilet.

Twice. And this is the thing, right? Spiders don't even threaten our life in any way, do they? Huntsman spiders, they're completely harmless. The guy doesn't want to be in my bedroom any more than I want him to be there.

But you know what? Sin genuinely threatens your life. God's wrath burns against sexual immorality, evil desire, idolatry.

So how much more should we not even entertain the thought of these things? No, we need to be ruthless in how we deal with our sin. And with this list, you'll see that Paul is dealing with the very heart of our desires, our old desires.

These things used to drive and motivate us. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire and greed. I would say that many of our sins have their origin in these desires.

[10 : 26] But now because of Jesus, we have now died to our earthly nature. No longer do these things have to control us. Why? Because now we've been set free from our old nature.

So now instead we set our new desires, our hearts on Christ instead and our new life with him. And that means getting rid of this old way of life. But not only should we put to death our old desires, but we're also to get rid of these old ways of relating to each other.

Look at verses 8 to 9. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these. Anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips.

See, how we treat each other is actually a major indicator of whether we have truly put to death our old way of life. And what you'll notice about this list is that these are all things that destroy and they cripple human relationships, don't they?

Things that really bring people down. I know for me, I used to really enjoy gossip and talking behind other people's backs, which is slander. I actually found it kind of fun.

[11:40] But as I grew as a Christian, I understood that gossip only tears people apart and that it has absolutely no place within God's community.

So in many ways, now I need to deal violently with that sin in my life. Because what I found was at my old job, everyone is gossiping about everyone. They're probably gossiping about me too, right?

So it means that sometimes now I need to physically remove myself from these conversations or I need to even call it out as gossip for what it really is. Because I don't want to even entertain the thought of having a go at people behind their back.

Because that's just not who we are anymore. In verse 9, Paul says, don't lie to each other since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in the knowledge, in the image of its creator.

So we are to put to death our old ways, this old nature, because we've already taken off the old life and we've been given an entirely new one in Christ.

[12:48] But because of this new life, because of this new, with our union we have now with Jesus, we've actually been given a completely new identity as well.

Have a look at verse 11. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, uncircumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all.

I don't know if you've been watching the Olympics, but it's been pretty great, hasn't it? It's been a lot of fun. But what I found about the Olympics is that it is patriotism on steroids. See, during the Olympics, it's almost like all other identities are cast off and now we are defined completely by our country, by our nationality.

And as strong as we think that pull is, you know what? It would have been even stronger for the Jews back in Paul's day because these were God's people. They were the circumcised ones, set apart as God's privileged people.

But because of this new identity that we have, we are no longer defined by our ethnicity, Jew or Gentile. We are no longer even defined by our status or what we do, slave or free.

[14:01] See, no, you are no better or worse than any other person. Why? Because our identity is in Jesus. Jesus is our whole life. Not that we completely lose our identity as Aussies or Chinese, whatever, but these things no longer separate.

They no longer divide us. And that's the beauty about church, isn't it? See, at church, we can now unite and have fellowship with people that we never would have before.

You might not share other people's interests. We might not share a similar background. But because of who we are in Christ, we all share the same identity.

And that means that we are able now to unite so strongly around each other because of that. The new life changes everything. So just as we are to put to death our old ways, we are to point three, put on the new ways.

And again, we'll see that with this new life comes a new identity. Verse 12. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

[15:13] We have been chosen by God. We've been made holy. We are not just loved. We are dearly loved by God. So no longer does our self-worth depend on how good we are, how well we do in our job or our success in life.

No, it depends entirely on our new identity in Christ, that we are dearly loved, regardless of anything that we do. It's an incredibly freeing thing, isn't it?

It frees me from deep feelings of inadequacy, frees us from the crippling fear of failure. It even helps us to celebrate when other people get the things or they achieve things that we don't, because our new identity is in Christ.

So just as we are to put to death these old things that destroy and cripple human relationships, now we are to put on, or we are to clothe ourselves now with things that build or grow human relationships.

Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. See, again, our new life here, it's fundamentally changing the way we relate to people. And as we live out this new life in Jesus, we will find ourselves comparing, I'm sorry, we'll find ourselves caring for people that we never have before, even being so patient and compassionate with people that we might have otherwise found really hard to deal with.

[16:36] And all these things can be summarized by this command to love, can't they? Verse 14, and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

And now I think this is actually a good guide for all of our new life. See, we can be constantly asking ourselves in every situation whether what I'm doing is motivated by and effective in loving others.

That's a great barometer for now how we can live this new life. But not only are we to clothe ourselves with these things, but as we meet together, we are to, verse 15, let the peace of Christ flow out to peace with one another.

And verse 16, to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly as we teach and admonish each other in God's word. And lastly, verse 17, we are to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Paul writes, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish each other with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

[17:51] And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Now notice there, verse 17.

See, because of our new life that we've been given, we now have been stamped with Christ's identity, haven't we? And now, doing everything in Christ's name forms the standard for all of our speech.

Every word, every thought, every action that we do. So what does it mean then to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus? It means gratitude.

Giving thanks to God in everything. See, we live in a culture now that's just so cynical, isn't it? What I find is people nowadays we're just constantly complaining, myself included.

The weather's too cold. Oh, the train's broke down again. I have too much work to do. Oh, the coffee's just pretty bad this morning. See, we even tend to bond around these common complaints, don't we?

[18:51] But you see, conduct which truly honors Christ's name, which truly honors him, is to do everything out of gratitude. Because we have already received everything in Jesus, we have been given this entirely new life in him, our lives should be marked by gratitude and thanksgiving.

To constantly complain and to grumble actually dishonors the work of Christ. No, we Christians should actually be the most grateful people on this planet. And our gratitude should be in spite of circumstances, because having this new life in him is truly greater than anything we could face.

It's a lot to take in, isn't it? And you know what? Sometimes I look at myself, I reflect on my own life, and I realize I'm just not as far along as I thought I'd be by now.

Not where I thought I'd be. I thought by now my character, my holiness, my life would just look a lot better than it does. And often what I find is our lives just don't feel or reflect of anything sometimes of this new life that we have received.

So I read now this list of stuff that we've just read. And you know, I'm tempted to just treat this as another list of do's and don'ts. Just another passage where I get to see just how horrible a person I am.

[20:13] But we need to remember here that Paul's encouragement for us today is not just another to-do list. But this first and foremost begins with Christ and our new life with him.

So even when it doesn't feel like it, even when I don't seem to have progressed at the rate that I thought I would by now, I know the reality that I have already received new life in him.

I've already died to Christ and risen with him. And my lack of growth can't change that. My feelings of dryness and discouragement, they don't change that one bit.

Because Jesus has already given me everything. He won't take it away. It's not like he's given it to us on loan. No, it's 100% ours. And that is where we find the drive to live out our new life.

And what we will find is when we come to grips with our new life and our new identity, we'll begin to change and people are going to take notice. Over the years, I've had the absolute privilege of witnessing this change in other people.

[21:25] I've seen some of the most self-absorbed people I know become some of the most self-less people I know. I've seen some guys that really struggled with lust turn from these things and actually pursue a life of purity.

I've seen people that just used to get angry all of the time. I've seen those types of people become so patient and gentle and loving. They're really reflecting the new life, aren't they?

But you know what? With all of these people, there was struggle. This was not a, oh, I used to struggle with sin, then I woke up one day and you know what? I'm fine. I don't struggle anymore.

No, this was hard. This was growth and relapse, growth and relapse, more growth, less relapse. But over time, it was amazing to see the change.

And this change came from placing and replacing and replacing our identity in Christ. It's a daily thing, isn't it, that we need to put off our old ways and put on our new ways.

[22:31] So even though we've already been radically changed by Jesus through his death and his resurrection, our change in character, our growth takes a lifetime.

Understanding who we are in Christ, what he's done for us, and then doing the hard work, doing the gritty work to conform our character into his image, grace and grind. So I want to encourage you, keep going, keep persevering, keep fighting sin and living out your new life in Christ.

I wonder how this passage might affect you today. Maybe something stands out to you and convicts you of what you need to put to death. Maybe it's something that you need to put on.

But my hope is that this passage, it's not just going to be one that you're just going to leave at the door today. But my hope is that it'll be something that challenges you to really live out your new life.

But whatever it is, we need to remember that we are God's dearly loved children and we need to let that move us to live like it. So now I'm going to pray and I'm going to thank God for this new life we have received in Christ.

[23:44] But then I'm going to pause and I'm going to give you a moment to pray to God quietly in your heads. Maybe to get rid of an old way. Maybe to put on a new way. Because it's all about living out the new life we have in Christ.

So why don't I pray? Heavenly Father, thank you that even when we were at our worst, you sent your son to die for us. Thank you that because of Jesus now we have been set free from our old life and have been given a completely new life in him.

And now we rejoice because there is nothing anyone can do to take that away from us. For our new lives are hidden with you. So Father, this motivates us now to grow into your likeness, to put off our old ways and put on the new way of life.

So Lord, we bring before you these prayers right now. So Lord, help us to live out now our new identities in you. Help us to grow, grow us a love for each other as we seek to image you more and more in our lives.

As we do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.