

Growing in Christ by Walking with God

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Date: 14 July 2024

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[0 : 0 0] All right, a couple of quick announcements for you. Today's kind of a busy day. We've got a preaching Sunday worship. We also have a baptism today, and we also have a membership class.

So for some of you guys might be saying, man, I thought about signing up for that membership class, but now is it going to be as hot as it is hot in here in the auditorium? The answer is yes. Actually, no. I actually have an air conditioning running full throttle in my office, and if you said, man, I forgot to sign up, I don't have food, guess what? We're bringing in food. So don't let that deter you, nor is coming to the membership class a guarantee of membership, or because you've come, you are a member, and you're afraid you still want to check things out. This is just one of the steps to get to know us, and that we get to know you, and we can explain some of the things that happen here and why they happen. Easy peasy? Makes sense? All right, let me just ask for the Lord's blessing. Today's sermon's a little bit different. I'm using different varying texts today, so there's not a specific text for you to turn to, but you could turn to Romans 12 to begin, but I won't be getting there for a little bit. But let me pray. Dear Lord, Holy Heavenly Father, I ask for your blessing upon this word. Lord, we know you are present in our worship. And Father, I pray that the words that I speak, the words of the scripture will be more than sufficient to open the eyes of the blind, to break the hardened heart towards you. May it be sufficient to open the key to the prison of death and open them up to a vision of life.

So Father, we ask for your most incredible name, and just in your name, and the power of your spirit to come upon us as we hear this word that you've prepared in my heart. In your name we pray. Amen.

So if you were here a couple of weeks ago, and I know many of you weren't, but you can make up for it because we do record our sermons. But we had a guest speaker by the name of Carl Hargrove, and he preached a sermon. It was entitled, Serving Our Eternal King. Serving Our Eternal King. It was based on 1 Peter 4. And not only did it bring a very powerful word to us, but in my opinion, he brought, there was two incredible, compelling points that we as believers need to come to understand.

[2 : 5 6] And the first compelling point that I thought he made was that once we have been called by Jesus, once we have been saved and are now making our new life, once we have experienced what he calls the new birth in Jesus Christ, we are in fact his. Amen? And what he said is he drew this great contrast.

Before that time, you had your time to live the life that you wanted to live, right? Because that's exactly what you were doing. You were living outside the bounds of Christ. You were pursuing your interests, your love, your hobbies, all the desires that you had, what you wanted. But now that you've been bought with a price by Jesus Christ, you are now his. And that means there's a whole new direction.

And he talked about, and the second point that he made is that we live in imminent times. Scripture talks to us about the imminency of his return. There is not an eternal time or a time that we live this new life. There is a time where Jesus is coming back, and that will end our time here on earth. We will end the opportunity that we have to live for Christ here on this earth.

We are now his. And the fact of the matter is, ownership means something. Now that we belong to Jesus, we are to live for Jesus. That is why, if you pay close attention to your New Testament readings, you will notice the apostles always introduce themselves as either slaves of Christ, servants of Christ, bond servants of Christ. It's all one word. In the Greek, it's called *doulos*, which in actual fact means that you are a slave to the master. You no longer belong to yourself. Thus, the priority is no longer you, but Jesus. Now, if that rubs you the wrong way, that you still want your priority, then maybe you're confused about your right standing with God.

Maybe you are for yourself, but you think you belong to God. But in fact, you still belong to yourself. Jesus is still outside of your world. Now, I realize that as a pastor and as a saint who's been a believer for the majority of my life, it's easier said than done. It's easier said than done.

[5 : 59] What is this new life upon which I talk about? If you are one who grew up in the church and you had Christian family members, perhaps your parents, uncles, grandparents, who've modeled this to you, so when I say the words new life, you get that. You understand that. You know what that means for you.

For some of you, you may have distant family members that live this new life. Perhaps friends have invited you to church and you've watched them. You don't live with them, but you've been part of their life and you see there's something there. You kind of get the gist of it and you're seeking wisdom. What does this new Christian life, what does this mean? So when I say that word new life, you more or less get it. But then there's a third part of the equation or, and for the person, for this person, I hope to be an encouragement. It's, what if you grew up outside the church?

You don't know any Christian vernacular. You just showed up to church, whether it be here or another church, and you heard a gospel message such as John 3.16, which simply says, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. And you believed. In that moment, you placed your faith in Jesus Christ.

You understood the message. You responded to that message and you placed your faith in the work of Christ to save you from your sin. And now you're asking yourself, now what?

What am I supposed to do? Am I supposed to go on a Mecca to Jerusalem? Am I supposed to sell my house and give everything to the church? What am I supposed to do? Let me tell you three things that you're not supposed to do, or two things that do not characterize, or what I mean when I say the new life.

[8 : 15] When I say the new life, it doesn't mean you pick up a few new habits. See, Jesus is going to give me a few strategies to run my business better. Or Jesus is going to give me some new strategies to make my marriage work better. New life doesn't mean I'm tweaking my old ways. The new life doesn't mean I'm going to try to be a better person. I'm going to try to be a better person to my spouse, my employees, my kids.

But what if I told you that God isn't interested in mere adjustments or minor renovations in your life?

What if I told you that God is not interested in a few retouches or the defects kind of smooth out?

What if I told you that what Jesus Christ calls you to is something entirely new? That it's something that is completely transformative? My friends, this is one of the most glorious truths of the Christian faith. That Jesus just didn't come to fix my old self. Jesus just didn't come to make adjustments to me. But Jesus came to give me a new life. So this morning, I want to present to you the essence of the gospel itself to explore what it means to live this new life that God calls us to.

What does it mean when God says we are now children of God? So this morning, I want to ask and answer five key questions to what it means to have a new life in Jesus Christ. The questions that I want to answer or ask and answer is, what is the nature of the new life? What was the cost for this new life?

What are the characteristics of the new life? How do we live out this new life? And ultimately, what is the goal of this new life? This new life that now belongs to Jesus Christ. You with me on that?

[10 : 43] Five key questions. Anybody ever ask those questions? No, absolutely. I've got some nods. All right. So the first question I want to answer is, what is the nature of the new life? What is the nature of the new life? Now, let's start by understanding the nature of this one life. And we're going to look at John 3. So turn in your Bibles to John 3. I tricked you by making you go to Romans 12, right? But I'm pulling you back to John chapter 3. It is one of the most famous passages in all of Scripture. If you've ever watched a Super Bowl or a hockey game or a baseball game, you're going to see it there on the screen somewhere. Somewhere at a crowd, someone's going to put up the sign, John 3.16. Now, what happens in John 3.16, let me just paint you this picture. Jesus has been preaching. It's kind of new. It's kind of early in his ministry, and he's doing these incredible miracles. And at night, what are the most interesting people that we're ever going to meet in Scripture? Seeks out Jesus.

This man, his name is Nicodemus. He is a Pharisee. If that word doesn't mean anything to you, it means that he is someone who has given himself over to the law. He has given himself over to live the right way. He believes he is living for God. He follows the law, and not only just the law, he follows the commentaries on the law. But he's not just any Pharisee. He's actually the ultimate

ruling teacher of the law in Israel. And he's heard Jesus preach. He's seen Jesus' miracles, and his mind is blown.

Everything that Jesus is teaching is contradictory to everything that he has stood for. So he comes to Jesus in the dead of night, and he's got this burning question. Verse 2.

It says, Rabbi. Now notice, he's now calling Jesus Rabbi. This guy is the head rabbi in all of Israel. And he comes to Jesus and says, Rabbi. He's recognizing that Jesus Christ's teaching has even surpassed his own. We know that you are a teacher come from God. No one, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with them. Now notice how Jesus responds. He says, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Now what he's doing is he knows what Nicodemus is going to ask him, because Nicodemus is in wanting to ask the question, and Jesus kind of interrupts him, is how do I make myself right with you? How do I get good with God? How can I become you?

And Jesus, anticipating what he's saying, says, hey, listen, unless you're born again, no matter what you do, you're not going to see the kingdom of God.

[13:46] So this isn't about a few new steps in life or adopting some fresh habits. This is about being born again. This means starting anew. The apostle Peter echoes this when he calls believers new born babies in 1 Peter 2.2. Paul takes it further in Galatians 6.15. He declares, for neither circumcision counts for anything. For the Jew, they believed because they were circumcised, because they were the sons of Abraham, they had right standing with God. No. Neither circumcision counts for anything, guess what? Nor uncircumcision. Doesn't matter if you're Jew or Gentile, but a new creation, a new creation. The point is profound here. God isn't tweaking the old. God is birthing something new.

It is new. There is this man I've been reading. He's a pastor from the Free Church of Scotland. His name is Horatius Bonar, and he wrote several books. His ministry was based in the 1800s, and I'm going to quote him here because he pulls no punches. He says, it is no outer thing made up of this new life is no outer thing. It's not made up of showy moralities or benevolences or picturesque rights and the graceful routine of devotion or sentimentalism. The new creation, he writes, is it is something deeper.

It is truer and more genial than that which is called deep and true and genial in modern religious philosophy. The affinities of the new life are with things above. Its sympathies are divine. It sides with God in everything. It has nothing beyond a few expressions in common with the superficialities of fables, which under the name of religion are current among multitudes who call Christ Lord and Master.

What he says, there's a lot of people who show a lot of religiosity, but it is not the new life they show. Now, why is this important? Because our old lives, no matter how polished they may seem, are fundamentally flawed. No matter how good we may look or perceive ourselves to be, we are fundamentally flawed. Romans 3.23 makes this expressly true. For all, not for some or many or few, but all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. When you fall short of the glory of God, you don't need a touch-up.

You need a total overhaul. This is why Jesus, the eternal Son of God, took on flesh, died, buried, and rose again. He didn't come to make good people better.

[17:11] He came to make dead people alive. You see, when the Holy Spirit comes into our life, He doesn't just enhance our old selves. He brings a new creation within. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5.17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come.

So if you were curious what Carl meant two weeks ago on what it is to be a new man, that is exactly what he's talking about. So the second question that I want to answer for you this morning is, what is the cost of this new life? What is the cost of this new life? The fact of the matter is, to fully appreciate this new life, we need to grasp the depth of God's love and the magnitude of His sacrifice. Romans 5.8 says, but God shows His love for in us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. It's not while we were trying our very best or while when we made ourselves look good or while we made a certain level. He saves us. He says, no, when we were sinners, Christ died for us.

I think we need to think about this for a moment. God's love for us was so immense that He gave His only beloved Son to die in our place.

That is what John 3.16 simply states, for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

This isn't just about saving us from something, but it's saving us to something. Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us to a new life, an eternal life, a relationship with God, a life transformed.

[19 : 37] And if you are unsure in your mind what God deserves from you, the fact that the cost of this new life that He gives to you was nothing less than the blood of Jesus.

That is the cost. The sinless Son of God took upon Himself the penalty of our sins, so that He who knew no sin became sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Theologians and scholars call this the great exchange. It is our sin for God's righteousness. Bonar answers the question, how bad is your sin?

Let me read from you from his book. He says, But that which God calls sin is something infinitely terrible, far beyond our ideas of misfortune and disease, something to which even Sodom and Sinai gave but faint expression.

It is something which the law curses and the judge condemns, something which needs a righteous pardon, needs a divine Savior, needs an almighty spirit, something which can destroy a soul and ruin a world, which can, from one single drop, overflow earth for 6,000 years and fill hell eternally.

[21 : 26] Graphic, but true. That one drop of sin is enough to condemn the whole world to hell.

See, God's sacrifice underscores the severity of your old life and the desperate need for your transformation. God's sacrifice reveals the depth of His love for us and His desire to bring us into the new.

God does not desire hell for us. God desires to give us His righteousness. So much so that He kills His own son so we may have it.

If you ever question, if God ever loves you, just look on the cross. His love is that big.

The Jesus who died was not a great moral teacher or a prophet or a revolutionary, but He was God's own son who willingly gave His life for the will of the Father.

[22 : 51] So now that we understand what the nature of the new life is, what the cost of the new life is, what are the characteristics of this new life. Let's take a look at what this new life actually looks like.

When we talk about a new life in Christ, we're talking about a radical transformation. Paul writes in the book of Ephesians 4, says, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life. And it's already corrupt through deceitful desires and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds. And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

The transforming work that Jesus Christ desires to do in your life through the power of the Holy Spirit is to be like Him. It's not just about changing a few behaviors, but it's a complete renewal.

See, the old self has sinful desires and corrupt practices. And we need to put those off. We need to understand that we are now created in the likeness of God.

[24 : 19] Think of it like this. It's not a renovation where we keep some old parts and replace a few broken parts, but it's a total rebuild.

Build. What's interesting, if you guys remember COVID, on our street, just about every house has been bought and sold. But it was interesting that one house, when they bought the house, they just kind of moved the old people in and you moved out the old people, moved in the new people.

Nothing really changes. We just see a few new faces. But a couple of them did a complete overhaul of that house. Pretty much ripped it down and tore out the old and put up the new.

We can tell they're new. It's easy to tell on our block that they are indeed new. The passage that Dave read for us this morning, gives us some very practical steps on how to live out this new life.

Simply says, if you've been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above. God has instructed us in his word, what is above, what is of God, rather than what is the world.

[25 : 46] Seek Christ, who is seated at the right hand of the Father. Set your minds on things that are above, not things that are on earth. And he tells us very claimly, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ and God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you will also appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness, which is idolatry.

The characteristic of the new life is to seek the things that are above. Our focus goes from here to there.

Our focus shifts from the earthly, the temporary concerns, to heavenly, eternal realities. We set our minds in Christ and allow his life to transform our actions, desires, and thoughts.

So those are the characteristics of the new life. The question that most people struggle with is, how do we practically live this out? What does this practically look like in my life?

[27 : 04] So take a look at Romans 6 with me. Romans 6, please. Verse 11. Verse 11. To live our life out practically, and I remember there was this book that came out in the 80s that really helped people understand this thought process, but it begins with understanding our identity in Christ.

And if you remember, a couple of weeks ago, weeks ago, a couple of months ago, I preached a sermon on are you a saint or are you a sinner? And how you see yourself before God will largely determine how you will live your life before God.

The fact of the matter is, if you have a new life, you are a saint. You are a saint, granted who sins, but you are not enslaved by the sin. You are not defined by the sin.

You are identified by the new life in Jesus Christ. You with me on that? That is who your identity is. Satan, one of his greatest weapons against us is to think the otherwise.

Right? He wants you to see yourself as a sinner. He wants you to see yourself in the enslavement and entrapment of sin. And he wants you to see you and identify with your habits, which you are struggling with.

[28 : 40] So that you will not break free. You won't even seek to break free. So Romans 6 verse 11 says, So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

So that's where it all begins. It's understanding I am alive in Christ Jesus. Amen? New life. This is where I stand. Do not, do, let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions.

Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness. But present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from life from death to life and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

This is foundational. It is to simply say, I am dead to that. When we are being tempted, it's to say, I am dead to that.

Sometimes we need to audibly speak. That doesn't have a hold over me, Satan, anymore. Satan, it means nothing. Why? Because I am alive. I am in Jesus Christ.

[30 : 02] I am dead to that. Your identity is now in Christ and this changes everything. Now, how does this live out practically?

Well, if you are alive in Christ, you seek God out, right? You seek to be next to Jesus. You seek to be, seek to understand his words.

He's given us a Bible, God's words. He has not made himself a mystery for us to seek all over. What is your will for me, O God? It's right here.

How am I to live, O God? Right here. God, I need wisdom. Where do I find it? Right here. So a practical way is to seek after God.

This means spending time in prayer, reading our scriptures, and meditating on his truths. It's through this ongoing relationship with God that we are continually transformed.

[31 : 07] Another and perhaps one of the greatest weapons to keep us focused on God rather than on ourselves in this world is church. God gave us a church community.

Hebrews 10, 24 reminds us and says, let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

We need the church. I need you. We need you. The Christian life was never meant to be lived in isolation, but it's always been intended to be lived in community.

We encourage, challenge, and support one another and we walk this journey of faith. And lastly, as we all know, living out the new life involves active obedience.

James 1, 22 warns us, be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves. For anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer.

[32 : 22] He is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forget what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, but being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will bless in his doing.

I think if we asked ourselves the question, do we want to receive God's blessings in our life? The answer is yes. And that blessing is a right relationship with Jesus Christ.

It is an active relationship with Jesus Christ. It's not that I live my own life and I ask myself, God seems so far. That's not his fault. It's a series of choices you made.

The fact of the matter is we must put into practice what we learn from God's word. It's not enough to know the truth, but we need to live this truth. It means making choices that align with God's will even in this difficult culture.

So now I want to ask and answer the final question for you this morning. What is the goal of the new life? What is this goal of the new life?

[33 : 45] And I'm going to extrapolate this more next week. But the goal of the new life is called holiness and righteousness. The ultimate goal of this life is holiness.

1 Thessalonians 4, 7 tells us, For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. We are called to be holy because God is holy.

Now this call to holiness is comprehensive. It is to affect every aspect of our life. Allow me to read from Bonar once again. It says, This holiness or consecration extends to every part of our persons. It fills up our being. It spreads over our life. It influences everything we are, we do, we think, we speak, we plan, whether it's small or great, outward or inward, negative or positive, or loving, our hating, our sorrowing, our rejoicing, our recreation, our business, our friendship, our relationships, our silence, our speech, our reading, our writing, our going out and our coming in, our whole man and woman in every movement of spirit, soul, and body.

In the house, the sanctuary, the chamber, the market, the shop, the desk, the highway. It must be seen that ours is a holy life.

[35 : 26] That ours is a consecrated life to God. Ephesians 1.4 says, Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

You see, we are chosen to be holy, set apart for God's purposes. Now here's where the mistake gets made and you've heard me many times, holiness is not about legalism or self-righteousness, but holiness is about reflecting the character of God in our lives.

It's about being transformed from the inside out. Begins with our thoughts, our actions, and attitudes which align with God.

And here's the passage in Romans 12 I asked you to refer to. It simply says, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world. They'll be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, what is acceptable, and what is perfect.

[36 : 58] You see, presenting our bodies as living sacrifices means that every part of our lives is dedicated to God. It's not just Sunday.

It's not just Sunday and Monday and Wednesday Bible study too. It's every single day. So let me recap what we've just covered this morning.

We've seen that God himself calls us to a new life, not just a better life, but a new life. This new life is rooted in the profound love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ who died to bring us from death to life. We've explored the characteristics of this new life marked by righteousness and holiness and discussed practical ways to live it out and ultimately the goal of this new life is to reflect God's holiness and righteousness in everything we do.

to transformation that has to happen on the inside which affects the outside. So my challenge to you this morning is to embrace the new life that God is calling you to.

[38 : 21] Embrace it. Don't settle for minor adjustments. Don't settle that you can feel comfortable just coming together here to say you have friends.

Give your whole week to Him. Give every relationship to Him. Allow the Holy Spirit to do His transforming work in you.

That begins by praying. That means saying no to sin. And you know there's stuff in our lives it's not sin but it can be the busyness of life which I think is probably the number one pullback on anybody's Christian life today is the busyness of life.

Whether it be the busyness of work the busyness of fun and let's be honest Squamish is a fun town. We seek all too often our own fun.

But don't settle for minor adjustments or superficial changes. seek God daily. Live with God in this community that He's called you to.

[39 : 32] And actively obey the Word. If you are here and you do not know this new life maybe today is that day.

Maybe today is the day you come to understand and accept what God has for you. The Bible teaches that God chooses and draws according to the good pleasure of His will. It also tells us that He hinders no man or woman from coming to Him or from willing to come to Him. For God alone is the giver of faith.

Yet faith comes through hearing and hearing comes by hearing the Word of God. God the fact of the matter is Jesus invites you to come to lay down your old life and receive the gift of new life. It's not about earning it. It's not about deserving it. It's about accepting His grace and stepping into the fullness of the life He offers. and you will see the evidence of that in the means of grace that God dispenses on us.

[40 : 52] So this morning we have a baptism and in this baptism is an outward reflection of dying to the old self. You guys are going to have the pleasure of meeting Regini who's been attending here for the last several months.

She's going to read her testimony about a big part of what she's going to be doing today is saying I'm saying no to the old. I do not want anything to do with Satan and his means and I want the new life that Christ offers.

So what she's going to be doing is I'm going to take her into the waters and that represents her life dying with Jesus and then birthing again in the new life.

It is a visual representation of what baptism is to be what the new life the Christian life is to be. This is something to be celebrated to be rejoiced in. So I pray that we will honor her and hear her testimony and I look forward to that but before we get there I'm going to say a prayer to close and the worship team is going to lead us in song and then we will enjoy this means of grace this baptism where we get to see God's truth worked out in a visible significant way.

[42 : 15] Let us pray. Dear Lord Heavenly Father I am so deeply appreciative of the words from older saints who have thought much about their lives even in simpler times.

They talk about the busyness of life, the distractions that we encounter in this new life. Father we know that Satan tends to use the same tools over and over and over to distract ourselves.

We try to get good at something here thinking that it's going to mean something for eternity but truly it means nothing. whether it be money or awards or fame or glory they all pale.

The fact of the matter is usually after a generation after we pass from this earth our names are not spoken. We truly live in a drop of time and in the reference of time we are insignificant but in reference to you we are significant.

You died for us when we claimed to hate you. You died for us when we said we don't have time for you. You died for us when we said we don't want anything to do with you.

[43 : 51] You died for us even when we cursed you. you forgive us for cursing for ignoring you forgive us for being foolish for being stupid you forgive us for even ignoring godly parents in our lives who instruct us in your way forgive us for having grandparents that loved us and continued to pray for us.

Forgive us for ignoring our friends who invited us to church and desperately wanted us to be saved. Forgive us for mocking for scorning for ignoring them all.

I pray that every life here that is lived for Christ the new life is seen clearly. I pray that the effects of this new life will be lived eternally not just in their life but the lives that witness it and are turned as well.

That they can see that what God calls us to is good it is righteous. And Father just as we hear this profession of faith from Ranjini we give you thanks that even over in India just through the example of family she was able to see the new life and seek forgiveness for her sins.

So Father we give you thanks and we ask you to continue to bless our night our day of worship this day. In your name we pray. Amen.