

Dead Church Podcast Notes

Acts Initiative

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Ep. 5 – The Protestant Gospel vs. The New Testament Gospel

What is the Gospel? What is the good news? That's what the word *gospel* means. The word *gospel*, or *good news*, is used many times all throughout the New Testament. It's a word most Christians are familiar with – but, do we know what it is?

If you are a Christian, or if you've grown up in Church, I want you to stop and think for a moment: What is the gospel? What have you been told the gospel is? What is your understanding of the gospel?

I was raised in the Church, went to a private Christian school, and spent twenty-five years of my life regularly attending Church every Sunday. I was taught that the gospel is this:

I am a sinner. I have sinned against an eternal God, and therefore I have an eternal debt. Jesus came as the eternal God in the flesh, and he died to pay that eternal debt. So, now I can receive forgiveness for sinning against an eternal God because the eternal debt has been paid, and now I can go to heaven.

Essentially, the gospel I was taught is that Jesus died in my place, so I don't have to. He took my punishment, so that I don't have to pay that debt. I don't have to die, and I can go to heaven.

This is largely what the Protestant Church teaches: that we're saved by believing that Jesus paid our entire debt – that he did everything.

The problem is that this is not the gospel preached in Scripture.

It's not the gospel Jesus preached. It's not the gospel the apostles preached.

Now, I'm not saying you don't receive forgiveness. I'm not saying you don't go to heaven. I'm not saying Jesus' death wasn't important. But they were not preaching, "Jesus died simply to pay your debt," and they were not teaching that he died so that you don't have to.

So often, we look at what Jesus did, and because of what the Protestant Church teaches, we think that we receive salvation by believing in what Jesus did. We think that we don't have to do anything. This idea comes from passages like the one in Ephesians, where Paul said we're saved by grace, through faith, without works – it's a free gift of God so that no man can boast.¹ We look at that verse, and we say, "That means we're saved without doing anything."

We've been talking about this throughout this series. We've seen that Jesus and the apostles also clearly taught that you *do* have to do certain things... so then, how can Paul say we're saved by faith without works so that no man can boast? If I must do something, doesn't that mean that I can boast?

In the Church, we're taught that we are saved by believing Jesus did something. We're taught that we are saved by trusting that he paid our debt and trusting that now we don't have to die. We're taught that we don't have to die for who we've been and everything we've done.

But, there's a problem with this.

This is the exact opposite of what Jesus and the apostles taught.

¹ Ref. Ephesians 2:8-9

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They did teach that we receive forgiveness. They did teach that we go to heaven. But they also taught that we must die.

In the Church today, we treat it as if it's simply a legal system: *You owe a debt, it needs to be paid.* But that's not actually addressing the problem. The problem is not debt. The problem is that you became an evil person. When you participated in eating of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you gained the knowledge of good and evil. By *participating*, I simply mean that you, at some point in your past, chose to do something that God says is evil – you participated. And by *knowledge*, I mean the same thing the word *knowledge* means in the Bible – it doesn't mean you know facts and information; it means you have experiential knowledge – you know evil personally, through experience.

By committing evil, you became an evil person. The penalty is death – not because of a legal system – but because the evil must not continue. It must be stopped. You have become a person who cannot continue to exist.

So, it's not just about debt payment. It's not just about forgiveness. That evil person must be put to death. That evil person that now exists because you have evil in your heart must die. You cannot enter the presence of God with evil still inside of you. You must die. The evil must be stopped.

So, Jesus' death was not only about forgiveness; it wasn't simply about paying your debt. It wasn't just a legal system. Jesus and the apostles taught that his death was about setting you free from sin.² It was about removing the evil by putting it to death. Jesus died so that you can join yourself to him and die with him. He died so that evil person in you – who you are – can die.

He didn't die so that you don't have to. No – he died so you can die with him.

This is what Paul said about it:

“I have been crucified with Christ, and I do not live anymore – it is Christ who lives in me. I still live in my flesh, but I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”³

In this verse, Paul described himself as being crucified with Jesus. It wasn't just Jesus who died. For some reason, Paul considered himself to have died with Jesus, and he said that he was no longer the person living – it was Jesus living in him.

I read this verse so many times while growing up in Church, and I always thought Paul was basically just being poetic. What he said is not the gospel I was told. I was not told the gospel is that I die with Christ. I was told the gospel is that Jesus died so I don't have to. I was told the gospel was entirely about debt payment. So, I assumed Paul must have been speaking somewhat poetically about how his life changed after he became a Christian. He must have been describing his experience – not explaining a concept essential to the gospel message.

But, that's not what was happening here.

This concept of *dying with Jesus* is consistently what Paul preached in all his letters. He didn't just say it about himself – he said it about everyone. He repeatedly taught that you die with Christ – not that Christ died in your place. His gospel wasn't about substitution. It was about joining ourselves to Jesus and dying with him. Here are several examples where we can see that this is what Paul preached as part of his gospel message:

“May it never be that I boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through that cross the world has been crucified to me and I have been crucified to the world.”⁴

² Ref. John 8:31-36; Romans 6-8; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Galatians 1:3-4, 5:16; Colossians 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 8:6-10:23; 9:14-15; 10:20-21; 1 Peter 1:18-23, 2:24-25; 2 Peter 1:4, 2:19; 1 John 3:4-10, 5:18

³ Galatians 2:20

⁴ Galatians 6:14

Again – through the cross, Paul was crucified. He preached that he died with Jesus – not that Jesus died in his place. And he said this is true about everyone, not just himself:

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature. They have given up their old selfish feelings and the evil things they wanted to do.”⁵

In this verse, Paul went from saying that *he* had been crucified with Christ to saying that *everyone* who belongs to Christ has crucified their sinful nature. In other words, it’s not just about him, and he was not just being poetic. He was not just talking about his own journey. He was saying this is true of everyone who belongs to Christ.

He said this again: “In Christ you were also circumcised, but not with a circumcision done by hands. It was a circumcision done by Christ, which cut away the body of flesh. When you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and you were raised up with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.”⁶

Through Jesus, we are circumcised – our flesh is cut away. More than that, when we are baptized, we are buried with Christ. Just like Jesus was buried in a tomb, we also are buried with him when we are baptized. Why? Because, as Paul said many times elsewhere, we died with Jesus. We died with him and we were buried with him.

He also said, “Since you died with Christ and were made free from the elementary teachings of the world, why do you act as if you are still are living in this world...?”⁷

Notice what Paul said here. He asked the Colossians a question based on something that he presumed they already knew. He said, “since you died with Christ... why do you act as if you are still living in this world?” Paul presumed that they already knew they had died with Christ. Remember – Paul was the one who had preached the gospel to the Colossians in the first place. He presumed they knew they had died with Christ because that was the gospel message he had originally preached to them! So, in his letter, he was saying to them, “you already know that you died with Jesus – so why are you still acting like you live in this world? Why are you acting like you haven’t died?”

A few paragraphs later, he re-iterated: “You died, and your new life is hidden with Christ in God.”⁸

This is clearly the message Paul preached. He never said, “Jesus died in your place.” He never said, “Jesus is your substitute.” And he never said, “Jesus died so you don’t have to die.” He taught that Jesus died so that you die with him.

He wrote to the Corinthians, “The love of Christ compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, so all have died.”⁹

So, we see that Paul said:

- Through the cross, the world was crucified to him, and he was crucified to the world
- The flesh is crucified through Jesus – those who belong to him have given up their old selfish nature and its desires
- In Christ, we are circumcised – not with traditional circumcision, but by having our flesh – our sinful nature – cut away
- When we are baptized, we are buried with Jesus and rise from the dead with him
- We died with Jesus and were made free from this world
- We died with Jesus and our new life is with Jesus

⁵ Galatians 5:24

⁶ Colossians 2:11-12

⁷ Colossians 2:20

⁸ Colossians 3:3

⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:14

- Jesus died for all, therefore all have died

Repeatedly, Paul preached, “You died with Christ. You were crucified with Christ. Everyone who belongs to Christ has been crucified with him. One died and so all have died. I’ve been crucified with Christ.”

The gospel that Paul preached is not that Jesus died so I don’t have to. The gospel Paul preached is that I died with him. Who I was died. The apostles understood that Jesus didn’t come just to pay debt. He didn’t come to take your place as your substitution. They understood that it’s about your sin. Your evil heart must die. Who you are as an evil person must die. That’s what the Law says.¹⁰

You cannot come into God’s presence as an evil person. You can’t come into God’s presence with evil still in your heart. That person must die. You can’t be someone who continues doing evil, and who continues having evil within you. The evil has to die. You – the evil person – must die. That’s what Jesus’ death was about.

In the Book of Romans, Paul wrote an entire chapter focused on this. Here is a section from that chapter:

“What then shall we say? Do you think we should continue sinning so that grace may abound? Absolutely not! *We died to sin*, so how can we continue living in sin? *Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus participated in his death through that baptism? Therefore, when we were baptized, we were buried with Christ and participated in his death.* So, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also can live a new life. *Christ died, and we have been joined with him by dying too.* So we will also be joined with him by rising from the dead as he did. *We know that our old life died with Christ on the cross so that our sinful selves would have no power over us and we would not be slaves to sin. Anyone who has died is made free from sin. Now if we died with Christ,* we know we will also live with him. Christ was raised from the dead, and we know that he cannot die again. Death has no power over him now. Because, *when Christ died, he died to defeat the power of sin once for all.* But he now has a new life, and his new life is with God. In the same way, *you should consider yourselves as being dead to sin and alive with God in union with Christ Jesus.*”¹¹

So, in this section, Paul was saying that when Jesus died, you died with him. You die to sin. You participate in the death of Jesus through baptism. When you are baptized, you’re buried with Jesus. Your old life, which was controlled by sin because you had a sinful nature, died with Jesus, so sin has no power over you now.

Paul did not say Jesus died so you don’t have to. He said Jesus died and you died with him. You join him in death. You follow him in death. That old person you were, born from Adam with the knowledge of good and evil – that person must die. Through Jesus, that life ends. You die with him. Your old self dies. The person you used to be dies.

But more than this, it’s clear from the way he addressed the issue that this wasn’t something new he was explaining to his audience. Just like his letter to the Colossians, this was a message he expected them to already be familiar with. He asked them how they can continue living in sin if they’ve already died to sin. He assumed they already knew that they had died. He said, “don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ participated in his death through that baptism?” So, he was presuming that they already knew this. He said, “we know that our old life died with Christ...” Again, this wasn’t new information.

Based on the way Paul wrote about this, it’s clear that he assumed his audience already knew that they had died with Jesus. This means that *dying with Jesus* was an essential part of the gospel message they would have already heard when they became Christians.

¹⁰ Ref. Deuteronomy 17:17, 19:19, 22:21, 22:24, 24:7; 1 John 1:5-6

¹¹ Romans 6:1-11, emphasis added

The gospel Paul preached was that we die with Jesus – that we’re buried with him when we’re baptized, and sin loses its power over us. It wasn’t debt payment, and it wasn’t substitution. We see this message spread throughout all his letters.

Furthermore, he wasn’t the only one who preached this. Jesus taught the same thing. This is what Jesus said:

“Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who try to hold on to their lives will give up true life. Those who give up their lives for me will hold on to true life.”¹²

So, Jesus said the same thing Paul said.

Paul said, “I’ve been crucified with Christ.” He said everyone who belongs to Christ has been crucified with him. The reason Paul said this was because Jesus had said that unless you take up your cross and follow him, you’re not worthy of him. Paul was crucified with Jesus because Paul had taken up his own cross and followed him.

If you try to hold onto your old life, you will not have true life. Why?

Because you must die.

If you’re trying to hold on to who you used to be, you can’t have true life – because in order to have true life, you have to die with Jesus.

This was something Jesus said repeatedly. It’s not just that each of the gospel writers recorded him saying it. No – Matthew recorded it twice. Luke recorded it three separate times. Obviously, this was something Jesus said over and over again.

If you want to follow him, you must take up your cross and follow him to death.

Many times, we don’t realize what that means because our modern Church culture has lost the significance of what it meant to carry a cross. We think of the cross as a religious symbol. We think of the cross as a good thing. We don’t think of the cross the way people did two thousand years ago.

The cross was a form of brutal execution. The Romans regularly crucified people and displayed their execution publicly along the sides of busy roads. Crucifixion was a terrible form of death. It was slow, agonizing, and humiliating. And, the Romans would often make their victims carry their own crosses to the place where they would be put to death.

This is what Jesus’ audience would have thought of when he told them to take up their cross and follow him. They would have immediately remembered the crucifixions they had personally witnessed. They would have immediately thought about the people they had seen carrying their crosses just before their deaths.

Furthermore, though they did not understand it at the time, they were about to see Jesus carry his own cross up a hill to his own death. They were about to witness his execution. This statement was about to become very real to them.

The second time Matthew recorded Jesus saying this, he said, “From that time on Jesus began telling his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, where the Jewish elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of the law would make him suffer greatly. He told them he must be killed and then be raised from the dead on the third day... Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone wants to follow me, they must set aside their own interests. They must take up their cross and follow me. Those who want to save their lives will lose their life, and those who lose their lives for me will have true life.’”¹³

Jesus was saying, “You are about to see me pick up a wooden, splintery cross, carry it out to my own place of execution, and die. And, unless you do the same thing, you’re not worthy of me.” “Carrying your cross” isn’t about being willing to face persecution, or “dying to self” after you become a Christian, as many Christians think. It isn’t something you learn to do with time. Jesus was saying

¹² Matthew 10:38-39

¹³ Matthew 16:21-22, 24-25

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that in order to become his disciple in the first place, you must grab your own cross and follow him to death. You must die with him. If you try to hold on to your life, you will lose true life.

Mark recorded saying Jesus saying the same thing: “If anyone wants to follow me, they must set aside their own interests. They must take up their cross and follow me. Those who want to save their lives will give up true life. But those who give up their lives for my sake and for the Good News will have true life.”¹⁴

Luke recorded Jesus saying this three times:

“Jesus said to all of them, ‘If anyone wants to follow me, they must set aside their own interests. They must take up their cross daily and follow me. Those who want to save their lives will give up true life. But those who give up their lives for me will have true life.’”¹⁵

“Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow me cannot be my follower.”¹⁶

“Those who try to keep their lives will lose them. But those who give up their lives will save them.”¹⁷

And John wrote it down as well:

“I tell you the truth, a grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die to make much fruit. But if it never dies, it remains only a single seed. Those who love their lives will lose them, but those who hate their lives in this world will keep true life forever.”¹⁸

So, the writers of the gospels recorded Jesus repeatedly saying that if you try to hold onto your old life, you can’t have life. He was saying you must give up your life. You must take up your cross. You must be crucified with him. Not only did he say you have to do this, but he said that if you don’t do this, you can’t be his follower.

Essentially he was saying, “If you don’t die with me, you cannot be my follower.” If you don’t die with Jesus, you cannot be a Christian.

Jesus was talking to his disciples. They were about to watch him literally take his cross to his death, and he was telling them, “Unless you do the same, you cannot be my follower.”

This is where Paul got this idea that he was crucified with Christ – that he died with him. It’s what Jesus taught! Jesus and Paul were saying the same thing. They were both saying you must die with him in order to live. In order to be a follower of Jesus, in order to be a disciple of Jesus, you must be crucified with him.

If you want to live, you have to die. That’s the message Jesus and Paul were both preaching.

It’s not *Jesus died so you don’t have to*. It’s not *Jesus took your place so now you don’t have to die*. No, Jesus was saying, “If you want to follow me, you need to follow me into death. You have to die.” When you choose to become a Christian, you’re not choosing to just believe that he did something on your behalf. You’re not choosing to believe that he did something for you so you don’t have to do anything.

No, when you become a Christian and you get baptized into Jesus, you are saying, “I choose to die with him. I choose to die. Everything I am dies. My old life dies.” You’re acknowledging that if you try to hold onto your old life, you can’t have life. And if you try to follow Jesus without dying, you won’t have life. If you try to become a Christian without dying, without ending who you were, you won’t have life.

This is the message they were preaching.

¹⁴ Mark 8:34-35

¹⁵ Luke 9:23-24

¹⁶ Luke 14:27

¹⁷ Luke 17:33

¹⁸ John 12:24-25

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This is the message of salvation that Jesus and the apostles proclaimed. You must die in order to be his disciple.

But, that's not what the Church teaches. The Church says you become a Christian and then, over the course of your life, you learn how to "die to self." In other words, they teach that after you become a Christian, over the course of your life, you learn how to stop thinking about yourself, and how to, generally speaking, do good things.

That's not what Jesus said. That's not what Paul said. They said if you want to be his disciple in the first place, you have to die. It's a choice at conversion. The only reason it seems like it's not a choice at conversion is simply because it's not the gospel the Church is preaching. The only reason our experience tells us that Christians have to learn to "die to self" throughout the rest of their lives is because Christians aren't dying with Christ in the first place. They're still alive! It's not Jesus living in them! Our experience has become our standard for what is true – not Scripture.

In order to become a Christian, you must die. It's not the other way around. You "die to self" in order to become a Christian.

Today, the Church preaches that you are saved by believing. They preach that you are saved by trusting that Jesus did something for you so that you don't have to die. That's not biblical. You must die to become his disciple.

If you have not died, you do not have life. That's what Jesus preached. That's what Paul preached. If you think you can become a Christian and hold onto your old life, you are ignoring the words of Jesus.

The Church is telling you one thing, and Jesus is telling you another. His words are the exact opposite of what the Church is preaching. He said if you try to hold onto your old life, you will not have life. He was saying, "If you try to follow me without taking up your cross and dying, you are not worthy of me and you cannot be my follower." But the Church tells you that all you have to do is believe in him.

Someone is lying.

Who is the liar? Is it Jesus, or is it the modern Church? Someone must be lying, because they are teaching the exact opposite of one another.

If you want to be a Christian, if you want to be a disciple of Jesus, a follower of Jesus, and you want eternal life, you must die. That is what Jesus and the apostles preached.

However, that's not the only thing they preached.

We have this problem in the Church today where people are raised to think that the gospel is *the cross*. The Church teaches that the gospel is what Jesus did on the cross – that he died for our sins and paid our debt. I was raised being taught the "five-finger" gospel:

Jesus
Died
For
My
Sins

I was told that this message is the most important message. I was told we should never move on from this message. I was told that this message is the central point of all Christianity.

But there's a problem:

That's not the gospel.

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There's an old Yiddish proverb, "a half-truth is a whole lie."

In other words, if you're not telling the full truth, then you're still not telling the truth. If you're leaving something out, then it's still a lie.

The gospel that says, "Jesus died for my sins" is not the truth. It's a lie.

Why?

Because it's a half-truth. The gospel preached in Scripture is not just the death of Jesus. If Jesus died, and that's where we're ending the story, and all we talk about is his death on the cross, then it's a half-truth. And if it's a half-truth, then it's still not the truth. It's missing what is most important.

The Church tells us that Jesus died entirely to pay our debt. They tell us that his sacrifice is how we gain salvation. But Jesus didn't just die. He rose from the dead. His resurrection is just as important as his death. If he hadn't resurrected, then the gospel message is empty and useless.

Those aren't my words! Paul said it himself: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless... If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless; you are still in your sins."¹⁹

If we are only preaching a gospel that is about the death of Jesus, then we don't understand the gospel at all. Paul said that if the gospel you're believing in and trusting in is only that Jesus died, then your faith is useless. If Jesus died on the cross, but didn't rise from the dead, then you're still in your sins!

Jesus' death wasn't enough! His death doesn't set us free! Without his resurrection, nothing was accomplished by his death. Without his resurrection, our faith is useless and we're still in our sins!

If his resurrection is really this important, then clearly his death and resurrection were about more than just paying a debt! If it were really all about debt payment, then the debt would have been paid in full when he died – but Paul said that if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, then our faith would be useless, and we would still be in our sins. So, it must be more than just debt payment – right?

If our faith is useless without his resurrection, then why does the Church teach that the gospel is all about him dying in our place? Why does the Church teach that the gospel is "Jesus died for my sins"? Without his resurrection, his death doesn't take our sins – which would mean that even though he died, the debt still hadn't been paid.

In the gospel preached in the Church today, the resurrection has no real significance. They talk about it – sure. But no one really knows why Jesus had to rise from the dead. No one really understands why it was so significant. Many pastors explain that his resurrection simply proved that the sacrifice was accepted and paid in full. They say it was just a sign for us to know that there was nothing else owed. They say it wasn't a necessary part of our salvation, but it was for our benefit so we would know that our debt is cleared. They say that his resurrection was proof of what had already occurred in his death.

But that's not what Paul said! Paul said that if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, our faith is useless. He said that if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, then we would still be in our sins. Clearly, our salvation has just as much to do with his resurrection as it does with his death.

The gospel is not "Jesus died on the cross." He rose from the dead, too! And if he hadn't risen from the dead, then there is nothing to the gospel! If he hadn't risen from the dead, then what he did was useless.

Why?

Because his death wasn't about paying debt. His death was about setting us free. He died so that our sinful lives would die with him. And he rose again so that we could live a new life – not just in Heaven someday, but right now – in this life.

Just like you must take up your cross and follow Jesus into death, you also must rise from the

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17

dead with him into a new life. Your old life died with him and was buried with him. But, you also rose from the dead with him and can now live a new life.

You die with him. You rise with him.

Earlier we looked at a portion of Romans 6. We focused on the fact that Paul said you must die with Christ. But let's read that same section again, and see what he said about rising with Christ:

“What then shall we say? Do you think we should continue sinning so that grace may abound? Absolutely not! We died to sin, so how can we continue living in sin? Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus participated in his death through that baptism? Therefore when we were baptized, we were buried with Christ and participated in his death. *So, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also can live a new life.* Christ died, and we have been joined with him by dying too. *So we will also be joined with him by rising from the dead as he did.* We know that our old life died with Christ on the cross so that our sinful selves would have no power over us and we would not be slaves to sin. Anyone who has died is made free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we know *we will also live with him. Christ was raised from the dead, and we know that he cannot die again. Death has no power over him now.* Because, when Christ died, he died to defeat the power of sin once for all. *But he now has a new life, and his new life is with God. In the same way, you should consider yourselves as being dead to sin and alive with God in union with Christ Jesus.*”²⁰

Just like Jesus was raised from the dead, we too can live a new life. Just like we were joined with him by dying, we are also joined with him by rising from the dead. He rose from the dead and has a new life, and his new life is with God – so we, too, have new lives, and we are alive with God in union with Jesus.

Paul did not just say that, when you were baptized into Christ, you died with him; he said you rose with him too. That's what baptism is: you go into the water, then you come out of the water; you die with Jesus and are buried with him, then you rise with him.

Now, baptism is a huge topic for a whole other discussion. But, in the New Testament when the apostles were preaching and people asked, “What must we do to be saved?” their answer was, “Repent and get baptized.”²¹

Baptism is how you join yourself to Jesus. You die with him and rise with him. You join yourself to Jesus through both repentance and baptism – not just one or the other. If you get baptized and your life doesn't change, then you didn't die with him and rise into a new life. Through repentance, your old life dies, because you stop being who you used to be – your actions and lifestyle completely change. Through baptism, you are buried with Jesus and rise with him into a new life.

Following Jesus means you can't just continue living your old life. You can't just continue doing the things you used to do. You can't continue living in sin. When someone truly becomes a Christian, they die with Jesus and rise with him into a new life. Their old life is gone, and they begin to live a new life.

Paul was saying that you should consider yourself as dead to sin and alive with God. That old person you used to be is dead. But, it's not just that that person is dead. It's not just that you stop being who you used to be, and it's not just that you stop living in sin. You also rise into a new life. Jesus didn't just die; he rose from the dead! When you join yourself to him, you rise with him into a new life! You rise with him and are with God, in union with Christ.

Paul wrote about this elsewhere: “You were taught to leave your old self – to stop living the evil way you lived before. That old self is being corrupted, because people are fooled by the evil things they want to do. But you were taught to be made new in your hearts, to become the new person. That

²⁰ Romans 6:1-11, emphasis added

²¹ Ref. Acts 2:37-38

new person is created according to God – truly good and holy.”²²

Paul was describing the gospel message he had originally preached to the Ephesians. He was reminding them of what they had been taught when they first heard about Jesus. He was reminding them that they were taught to leave aside their old lives. They were taught to give their old lives up and stop living how they used to live. But that’s not all they were taught. They were also taught to become the new person – a person who is created according to God – truly good and holy.

If you’re joined to Jesus, your old self – your old sinful self – is dead, and you have risen with Christ into a new life where you are created according to God – truly good and holy. You are made new in your heart. You become a new person. Your old life is dead, and, like Jesus, you are living a new life.

Paul also wrote, “In Christ you were also circumcised, but not with a circumcision done by hands. It was a circumcision done by Christ, which cut away your sinful nature. When you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and you were raised up with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.”²³

Again – when you are baptized, you are buried with Christ and you are raised with him. Later in this same letter, Paul said:

“Therefore since you were raised with Christ, focus on the things above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Fix your thoughts on the things above, not the things on earth. For you died, and your new life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, is revealed, you will be revealed with him in glory.”²⁴

Again, through Paul’s letter, we can read between the lines to see what Paul had preached when he first brought the gospel to the Colossians. In his letter, he kept referring to what the Colossians already knew – things they knew because it was what he had preached to them when they first believed in Jesus. He wrote to them, reminding them that they had died – they died with Christ and rose with him. He was reminding them not only that they had died with Jesus, but that they were raised with him, too. All his instructions are built on this foundation – a foundation of death and resurrection.

Through this, we can see that when Paul first went to the Colossians, he preached a gospel in which people were called to die and rise with Jesus. He preached a gospel that included both the death and resurrection of Jesus. He preached a gospel in which our old lives come to an end, and we begin to live new lives.

Paul also wrote, “You have stripped off your old sinful life and the things you did before. You have put on the new person, in which you are being made new in the true knowledge of God according to the image of the One who created you.”²⁵

Again, Paul was talking about this new life. If you’re joined to Jesus, you’ve stripped off your old life and you’ve put on a new life. You have put on a new person – a new man, created according to the image of God. Your old life dies, and a new life – a new person, a new creation – rises.

A lot of times in the Church we look at these verses, but we don’t fully understand it because we’re being taught the wrong gospel. We aren’t being told that the gospel message is that we die with Christ. We aren’t being taught that we must give up everything. We aren’t being taught that we must completely die in order to follow Jesus. No – we’re being taught that in order to follow Jesus – in order to be a Christian – we must completely *believe*. We’re being taught that we have to believe something is true. We’re being taught that it’s just about acknowledging the information.

²² Ephesians 4:22-24

²³ Colossians 2:11-12

²⁴ Colossians 3:1-4

²⁵ Colossians 3:9-10

But that's not what Jesus said, and that's not what Paul said. They said you must pick up your own cross, follow him to your own execution, die with him, and rise with him into a new life.

That's the gospel they preached.

That's what sets you free from being the old person and lets you be a new person. You die and you rise with Jesus as a new person, created according to God. Paul called it a "new creation". He said, "If anyone belongs to Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have gone; the new has come!"²⁶

The gospel Jesus and the apostles preached was about becoming a new creation. It was about no longer being the old person. It was about becoming a new person. It was not about believing. It was not just about forgiveness of sins. It was not just about going to heaven. It was about being made into the person that God intended you to be. It was about being made holy and righteous – being made like God. It was about stripping yourself of the old sinful nature that you inherited because of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was about getting that evil out of your life and becoming a new creation. It was about rising with Jesus into a new life, becoming a new person, and becoming a new creation.

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot experience God's kingdom."²⁷

That's exactly what Jesus and Paul preached everywhere else! Your old self dies. The person who is a slave of sin dies, and you are set free. You rise with Jesus into a new life, as a new creation. You are born again.

Unless that happens, you cannot experience God's kingdom.

So, if Jesus and the apostles all taught that you must die with him and you must rise with him, what does that practically mean?

Over the course of Church history, the Church has adopted a lot of human traditions and Greek traditions. One of those traditions is that we've become distracted with Greek philosophy. What I mean is this: Jesus and the apostles were all very practical. If you read through the gospels, paying attention to the action steps that Jesus gave, you'll find that he gave very clear practical action steps. He said, "Do this. Do that. Live this way. Do that." It's very clear – especially in the book of Luke. Repeatedly, Jesus taught what we should be *doing*. Paul gave a lot of practical instructions, too.

My point is this: Jesus and the apostles did not preach philosophical ideas. They didn't get distracted with all the theology that the Church has gotten bogged down with.

For hundreds of years, the Church debated with one another about whether Jesus was fully God or fully man. Then they debated about the Trinity. Then they debated about predestination and God's sovereignty. They fill their minds with theological jargon and argue with one another about their own philosophical terms. Educated scholars have brought their intellectualism and Greek love of philosophy, and have distorted Christianity, completely missing the point of everything Jesus and the apostles taught.

The Church has become distracted, debating all these philosophical concepts, all the while missing or ignoring the fact that, for the most part, Jesus and the apostles preached lifestyle. They didn't preach philosophical ideas – they taught practical action.

Jesus was not a Greek. He was not a Gentile. He didn't come, loving philosophy. He was a Jewish rabbi. He was called a teacher, not because he taught philosophy, but because he taught people how they should live. His teaching was down-to-earth. It was practical. It was actionable.

So, when we look at the gospel Jesus and the apostles preached, we need to look for the

²⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:17

²⁷ John 3:3

practical action steps and not get caught up in philosophical ideas. If we tell people, “you must die with Christ and rise with Christ,” but we don’t explain what that means on a practical level, then we’re not actually helping anyone – because that leaves it as a philosophical concept, and doesn’t help anyone understand what they must do to be saved. Philosophical concepts and ideas don’t help anyone if they don’t know what those ideas mean on a practical level. Furthermore, when we teach from the Bible, if we focus on theological, philosophical ideas (which are often just a lot of meaningless jargon), then we’re not doing what Jesus and the apostles did. They taught action. They taught practical things that everyone could understand. They taught lifestyle. They gave people action steps.

If we can’t explain to someone what it practically means to die with Christ and rise with him, then we can’t help anyone come to him. It’s not enough to just know the theological terms. It’s not enough to just know and believe the information. It’s not enough to know you must die with Jesus and rise with him. If you don’t do it, then you can’t have life. So, we must be able to explain to people what it means – practically – to die with Jesus and rise with him. We must be able to explain it in a way that they can then go do it.

I’ve encountered some people who believe that we must die with Jesus and rise with him. But they often still treat it as a philosophical concept. They treat it as a spiritual thing that happens in baptism. They don’t teach people how to die, and they don’t teach people how to live a new life. They just baptize people and tell them to believe that they’re dying and rising with Jesus.

But that is not what it means to die with Jesus or rise with him. Jesus and the apostles taught lifestyle. They taught that you must change the way you live your life. They taught that you must become faithful to Jesus, you must love him, you must stop being who you used to be, and you must choose to become a new person. They taught action. They told people what those people should start doing with their lives.

If you get baptized, believing that you are dying with Jesus and rising with him, but you continue living your life the same way you did before you were baptized, then you didn’t die with him, and you didn’t rise with him. If your lifestyle isn’t radically redefined and completely changed in every way, then your old life didn’t die!

Dying with Jesus and rising with him isn’t just about going under water and coming back up. Jesus taught that dying with him and rising with him is a practical thing.

Dying with Jesus

Jesus said, “You are not thinking about the things of God, but only about the things people think are important.’ Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone wants to follow me, they must set aside their own interests. They must take up their cross and follow me. Those who want to save their lives will lose their life, and those who lose their lives for my sake will find life.’”²⁸

When Jesus said that we must lose our lives in order to have life, he said that we must set aside our own interests. So, what does that mean?

Setting aside our own interests means that everything changes. It means everything that is important to us changes. Everything we care about changes. Our priorities change, our decisions change, our values change. It means we give up everything that’s important to us. And, it means we stop looking out for our own needs (our own interests). We stop pursuing what is best for ourselves.

Jesus also said, “All those who have left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children, or farms for my name’s sake will receive a hundred times as much and they will inherit eternal life.”²⁹

“I tell you the truth, all those who have left houses, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, or farms for me and for the Good News will get more than they left. Here in the present age they will

²⁸ Matthew 16:23-25

²⁹ Matthew 19:29

have a hundred times more homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and farms. And with those things, persecutions. But in the age that is coming they will have eternal life.”³⁰

“If anyone comes to me but does not hate his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters – or even his own life – he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”³¹

“...you must give up everything you have to be my disciple.”³²

“I tell you the truth, all those who have left houses, wives, brothers, parents, or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will get much more in this age. And in the age that is coming, they will have eternal life.”³³

Jesus repeatedly said that we must give up everything. We must give up everything that’s important to us. We must give up everything that is important in this life – family, homes, fields (or in other words, businesses, careers, livelihood). Whatever it is, we must give it up. We must leave those things behind. Those things can no longer be our priority. Following Jesus costs everything.

When the rich young ruler asked Jesus what he must do to have life, Jesus said, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”³⁴

Taking up the cross means giving up this life. It means you stop holding onto possessions, you stop caring about the things of this life, you stop being preoccupied with the cares and concerns of this world. It means you stop living like everyone else, and you live only for Jesus. When we die with Jesus, all the things we used to care about die too. When we die with Jesus, we completely stop focusing on all the things of this world and this life.

Jesus also said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. One day a man found the treasure, and then he hid it in the field again. He was so excited that he went and sold everything he owned to buy that field. Also, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found a very valuable pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.”³⁵

According to Jesus, the kingdom of God is something so valuable that, when you find it, you happily give up everything to get it. Why? Because that’s the cost. In order to gain the kingdom of God, you must give up everything. You cannot continue living for this world, this life, and all the things of this life. You must give them all up to have God and enter his kingdom.

So, taking up your cross and following Jesus to death means you give up everything that is important to you. It means you stop living for this world. It means you stop living for family, friends, homes, fields, possessions, and wealth. It means you stop pursuing comfort, luxury, a higher standard of living, your dream job, or your life goals. It means you stop building your life around the things everyone else is building their lives around. Paul said it means you stop living for yourself:

“The love of Christ compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, so all have died. Christ died for all so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised from the dead.”³⁶

Dying with Jesus and rising with him means you no longer live for yourself, doing what you want, and enjoying all the things of this life. It means you begin to live for Jesus, and Jesus alone.

It’s not just about believing. It’s not just about going to Church. It’s about what you’re living for, what you’re pursuing, what you’re doing with your time, what you’re doing with your money, what

³⁰ Matthew 10:29-30

³¹ Luke 14:26-27

³² Luke 14:33

³³ Luke 18:29-30

³⁴ Mark 10:21 (NKJV)

³⁵ Matthew 13:44-46

³⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

you're doing with your possessions, and how you make your decisions.

Here's an example:

When I was young, I lived for marriage. I desperately wanted to get married. Every decision I made was based around the fact that I wanted to get married. A relationship was what was most important to me. There was one particular girl I was really interested in, and I would spend my time talking to her, getting to know her, and hanging out in the same circles as her. Having a relationship was my priority. All my decisions became about, "How can I get married?" It was what was most important to me at that point in my life.

Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God needs to take that priority. God's Kingdom must be what is most important to you. It should be what you make all your decisions around.

When I was living for marriage, I was still living for myself. I thought I was a Christian. I thought I was born again. I thought I was saved. But I proved through my actions that I was still living for this life. I was still living for the things I wanted. I was still looking out for my own best interests. I hadn't set aside my own interests. I hadn't given up everything to follow Jesus.

Marriage is not the exception to the rule. You cannot live for God and for marriage at the same time. You cannot be divided.³⁷ You either live entirely for God and God alone, or you live for something or someone else.

Jesus was saying, "If you want to follow me, you must stop caring about everything else. If you want to follow me, you must leave everything behind. You leave everything at the door, or you don't get in."

Following Jesus is all or nothing. If you think you've died with him, but you still live for other things, then you haven't died with him. As Paul said, "Christ died for all so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised from the dead."³⁸

If your decisions, your lifestyle, the places you go, the job you work, the school you choose, your career, your family, your finances, your home, or anything else are not about living for Jesus and doing what he wants, then you haven't died, and you haven't risen with him. And if you're not doing what he *said to do* with those things, then you haven't died with him, and you haven't risen with him – even if you've convinced yourself that you're living for him in those areas.

That's what it means to die with Christ. Everything that's important to you changes. You leave it all at the door. If you're trying to bring something with you, then you haven't died.

Rising with Jesus

As we saw in 2 Corinthians 5, Jesus died so we would no longer live for ourselves, but live for him. We also saw in Romans 6 that we are set free from sin – we're no longer slaves of sin, and we can live for God.

But, it's not just that we don't sin anymore. It's not just that we don't do bad things anymore.

Remember – *repentance* doesn't just mean you stop sinning. *Repentance* means you stop doing one thing, and you start to do something different. It means you stop living a certain way, and you begin to live a different way. Action is required for true repentance.

The resurrection is where we gain a new lifestyle. The resurrection is the new life that we begin to live. So much of the Church focuses on "not sinning," but they neglect the other half of the gospel – the resurrection.

Peter said, "Christ bore our sins in his body on the tree so we would die to sin and start living for what is right."³⁹

³⁷ Ref. 1 Corinthians 7:29-35

³⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:15

³⁹ 1 Peter 2:24

Peter didn't just say that we die to sin. He didn't just say that we should stop sinning. Yes, we should – but that's not all he said. He said that Jesus bore our sins so that we would die to sin (stop sinning) and *start living for what is right*.

This is the second half of repentance. This is the resurrection life. You stop doing bad things, and you start doing good things.

Through the death of Jesus, we can stop living for sin. Through the resurrection of Jesus, we can start living for what is right – doing what God wants.

Paul also wrote, “[Jesus] gave himself for us so he might ransom us from all wickedness and to make us pure people who belong only to him – people who are always wanting to do good deeds.”⁴⁰

Jesus paid our ransom so that we would no longer live in sin and wickedness, but also so we would become people who are always wanting to do good deeds. Again – it's both the death and resurrection. Our old life dies with Christ, and we begin to live a new life – a life where we are always wanting to do good deeds.

In Jesus, our old life is gone, our old desires are gone and our old priorities are gone. And in their place, we live a new life, always wanting to do good deeds.

So, in Romans 6, Paul said that we die to sin and rise into a new life. In 1 Peter, Peter said that we die to sin and start living for righteousness. In 2 Corinthians, Paul said that we stop living for ourselves and we start living for Jesus. And in Titus, Paul said that we are ransomed from wickedness and become people who are always wanting to do good deeds.

The resurrection is that new person we become – always wanting to do good deeds.

Paul also wrote about becoming a new creation, saying, “You have stripped off your old sinful life and the things you did before. You have put on the new person, in which you are being made new in the true knowledge of God according to the image of the One who created you.”⁴¹

In Jesus, our old sinful lives are removed, and we each receive a new life as a new person. We become a new creation – created according to the image of God.

That phrase, “created according to the image of God,” is a phrase borrowed from the Old Testament: “So God created man in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female.”⁴²

Over the years, I've heard a lot of people discuss how we're created in the image of God. A lot of people guess at what that means: *Does it mean we physically look like him? Does it mean we think like him? Does it mean we're creative like him?* The list of speculative ideas goes on and on...

But what I never heard anyone mention is the fact that Paul said the new creation is created in the image of God. Specifically, Paul said that we strip off the old creation, and we become the new creation, which is created in the image of God. In other words, our old creation was not in the image of God anymore.

The implication of what Paul said is that when Moses wrote Genesis, he wasn't saying that man is *still* in the image of God. He was saying that when God originally created man, he created him in his image. We read it and assume that man is still in God's image. But Paul said that the new creation is in the image of God, as opposed to the old creation, which was not.

Furthermore, Paul directly told us what it means to be made in God's image. He said, “You were taught to leave your old self – to stop living the evil way you lived before. That old self is being corrupted, because people are fooled by the evil things they want to do. But you were taught to be made new in your hearts, to become the new person. That new person is created according to God –

⁴⁰ Titus 2:14

⁴¹ Colossians 3:9-10

⁴² Genesis 1:27

truly good and holy.”⁴³

The new person is created according to God – truly good and holy.

Being made in the image of God means being truly good and holy.

When God created Adam, he created him truly good and holy. But when Adam sinned, he stopped being good and holy. Now, through Jesus, we can become a new creation – we can become truly good and holy again. Now, through Jesus, we become people who are always wanting to do good deeds.

When we are created in the image of God, we are called God’s children – sons of God. When Adam was created, he was called a son of God.⁴⁴ Now, as the new creation, we are called sons of God again. We are his children, inheriting his nature.

John said, “He was in the world, and the world was created through him, but the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him and believe in his name he gave the right to become children of God. They did not become his children by blood – by desire of the flesh or desire of a man. They were born of God.”⁴⁵

So, when we rise with Christ and become a new creation, we are born of God. We are children of God. And, being his children, we are like him.

Think of it this way: We inherit a lot of our traits from our parents. For example, I look a lot like my dad. I think a lot like my dad. In a lot of ways, I act a lot like my dad. I’ve inherited certain traits from him.

Scripture says that when we are raised with Christ, when we are born as children of God, we become like him. We inherit his traits. We are made in his image in the same way that I am, in a sense, made in the image of my dad: I look like him, I act like him, I think like him. When we’re born again, we’re made in the image of God: We look like him, we act like him, we think like him.

John also said, “All who are born of God do not continue sinning, because God’s seed remains in them. They are not able to go on sinning, because they have become children of God. In this way it is apparent who God’s children are and who the devil’s children are: Those who do not practice righteousness are not God’s children, and those who do not love their brothers and sisters are not God’s children.”⁴⁶

If you are God’s child, you will not go on sinning. Only the devil’s children continue sinning. The children of the devil inherited his nature. They do what their father does: They look like him, they act like him, and they think like him. They are made in his image.

Much like Christians today, the Pharisees kept reassuring themselves that they were children of Abraham and children of God. But they didn’t act like God. Jesus said to them, “I know you are Abraham’s descendants, but you want to kill me because you don’t accept my teaching. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, but you do what your father has told you.’ They answered, ‘Our father is Abraham.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were really Abraham’s children, you would do the things Abraham did. I am a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God, but you are trying to kill me. Abraham did nothing like that. So you are doing the things your own father did.’ But they said to him, ‘We are not illegitimate children. God is our Father; he is the only Father we have.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If God were really your Father, you would love me, because I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own; God sent me. You don’t understand what I say, because you cannot accept my teaching. You are from your father the devil, and you want

⁴³ Ephesians 4:22-24

⁴⁴ Ref. Luke 3:38

⁴⁵ John 1:10-13

⁴⁶ 1 John 3:9-10

to do what he wants. He was a murderer from the beginning and was against the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he reveals his on nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you don't believe me. Can any of you prove that I am guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? The person who belongs to God hears and obeys the words of God. But you don't hear and obey, because you don't belong to God."⁴⁷

The Pharisees claimed to be children of God. They claimed to be God's chosen people. They made all the same claims Christians make today. But they proved whose children they really were by their actions. They acted like the devil. They responded like the devil. They thought like the devil. They inherited his nature, because they were his children.

God's children aren't like them. They don't continue sinning, because they inherit God's nature – they become like God – they look like him, act like him, and think like him.

John also said, "We know that those who are God's children do not continue to sin. The one born of God protects them, and the Evil One cannot touch them."⁴⁸

John clearly taught that those who are born of God, those who are children of God, don't continue sinning. First, because they died to sin. But second, because they rose with Christ into a new life as a new creation, born of God – born again – made in God's image. God's children inherit his nature. They do what their Father does.

Scripture teaches that when we are born again and we become God's children, we become brothers and sisters with Christ himself – co-heirs with Christ.⁴⁹ So, everyone who is born again is a brother or sister of Jesus himself. We become part of his family.

But, Jesus didn't say, "Everyone who believes in me is my brother and sister." He didn't say, "Everyone who believes in my message is my family." No, Jesus said, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers and sisters?" Then he pointed to his disciples and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. My true brother and sister and mother are those who do what my Father in heaven wants."⁵⁰

Those who are truly in his family and truly born of God are those who do what God wants. They do what God wants because they inherit his nature. True children of God will do the things that God does. They're made in his image – they do what he does!

Jesus also said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you *so that you will be children of your Father in heaven*. He causes the sun to rise on evil people and on good people, and he sends rain to those who do right and to those who do wrong. If you love only the people who love you, what rewards is there for that? Even the tax collectors do that. And if you are nice only to your friends, you are no better than other people. Even the Gentiles are nice to their friends. Therefore you must be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."⁵¹

God does what is good – even to evil people. He sends them rain, and he provides them with the sun. He doesn't respond to their evil with evil. He responds to their evil with good. So, if we want to be his children, we also must love our enemies and do good to them. That is what God does, and if we are his children, we will do the same things he does. We must be perfect, just as our Father in heaven is perfect. His children will be like him.

This is what Jesus, Paul, and John taught. When you become a new person and are created in the image of God again, you become like God. You start thinking like God. For example, God loves his enemies. He does good to his enemies. So, if you say you're a child of God, but you are not living

⁴⁷ John 8:37-47

⁴⁸ 1 John 5:18

⁴⁹ Ref. Matthew 12:48-49; Mark 3:33-34; Luke 8:21; Hebrews 2:11-12

⁵⁰ Matthew 12:48-50

⁵¹ Matthew 5:43-48, emphasis added

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the way he would live, then you're not a child of God. God's children will act like him. God's children will think like him. God's children will be like him. They inherit his nature. When you are born again, and you are born of God, you begin to look like him.

Paul said the new creation is created in God's image – truly good and holy. When your old life dies, the life of sin and evil dies. And when you rise with Christ into a new life, you are born again. You become God's child. You inherit his nature. Again, as Paul put it: "Christ died for all so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised from the dead."⁵²

Rising with Jesus into a new life means living the way Jesus lived. It means living a truly good and holy life. It means becoming like God and prioritizing what God prioritizes. As John said, "Whoever says that he abides in God must live as Jesus lived."⁵³

The gospel preached in Scripture is not about believing, and it's not about just getting into heaven. It's about becoming a new creation. It's about your old life dying. Everything about who you used to be dies. That means all the things you used to care about stop being important to you. All the things you used to focus on are no longer significant to you. The way you used to make your decisions changes. You stop thinking the way you used to think. You stop living the way you used to live.

You become like God. You make decisions based on what he cares about. You focus on what he says is important. You care about what God loves, and you hate what God hates.

Like the Pharisees, many Christians go through life thinking they are children of God, thinking they are saved, thinking they're the new creation, but they still live for themselves. Their decisions are still about what's best for them – they're still based on the things of this life that they care about. They think they care about what God cares about, but they don't even know what God cares about.

They're deceived – exactly like we were warned many people would be. So, we need to understand what it looks like to live as the new creation, and we need to know how to get to the point where we know what God wants. How do we figure out what God wants us to be doing? What are those "good deeds" Paul said we should always want to do?⁵⁴ What does it mean to be a child of God?

⁵² Ref. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

⁵³ 1 John 2:6

⁵⁴ Ref. Titus 2:14