



Faith that
W A L K S

discovering the fullness of life in Christ

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Introduction

I was the pastor of a Southern Baptist church for 18 years. During that time I observed many people who professed to be followers of Christ, however, they were unable or unwilling to reach any semblance of spiritual maturity. This is a sad, but common, occurrence in the body of Christ today.

Remaining in spiritual infancy leaves many believers unaware of impending dangers lurking in the shadows of their spiritual journey; dangers that are compounded by their ignorance of the Word of God. Consequently, many of them have unwittingly defaulted to Satan's unlawful authority over their lives. As a result, they remain in spiritual bondage forfeiting their true freedom in Christ.

The reality is, God gives us the ability to overcome any obstacle to our spiritual development. Clearly, the Bible states that it is God's intention to conform us to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

The challenge is to add to our faith those things that pertain to Christ likeness. 2 Peter 1:3-10 lists virtues which supplement our faith and the warnings of what will happen if they are neglected.

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

The passage is clear: It is our responsibility to participate in developing these virtues. We become partakers of His nature when we add to our faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit, the virtues of excellence, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. Practicing what is learned through study strengthens our faith, furthering our spiritual maturity. Being passive, on the other hand,

leads to spiritual blindness which may cause us to doubt our relationship with Christ, thus, retarding our spiritual advancement and the expansion of the kingdom of God.

What happens when the people of God begin to practice what they have learned? They break from the status quo; they impact their families and communities; thus they become world changers. Challenging the kingdom of darkness, they become people who demonstrate true biblical faith—faith that walks.

Chapter 1

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

2 Cor. 5:17 ESV

One key aspect of a new life in Christ is knowing who we are in Him. It is impossible to circumvent this elementary understanding of identification without jeopardizing our spiritual journey of being conformed to His image. Whether you are a recent believer or one who has journeyed with Christ over time, it is essential that your relationship with Him is vibrant and growing.

Being a follower of Christ means that you are a new person spiritually. You are in right standing with God through Christ. You have been made righteous by Him—changed from the inside out by the Holy Spirit now dwelling in you. Everything except your physical body has been effected by this transformation. It has not yet undergone the complete change that made your spirit come alive to the things of God. That will happen when Christ returns for His people. Until then our bodies are still under the curse of sin and death.

Consequently, this puts your spirit in opposition to your flesh. As you grow spiritually, you will learn how to bring the flesh under the control of your new spiritual nature. This is a daily process that will continue throughout your life in Christ. But it is God who has begun this good work in you and He will bring it to completion (Phil. 1:6).

Knowledge of the Word of God is important in understanding how this process works itself out in your life. A lack of knowledge can

have serious consequences, however. Hosea 4:6 laments: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Neglecting the Word will, by default, lead to spiritual famine, preventing you from navigating the pitfalls that Satan continually sets. He wants to destroy you both spiritually and physically. He will exploit your ignorance of the Word of God to accomplish his goal.

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" is the exhortation from 2 Timothy 2:15. This is your challenge on the journey toward spiritual growth and maturity. The Spirit of God, illuminating the Word, empowers you to live an overcoming, victorious life. Your part is to believe and practice the truth He makes known to you. It is a journey of faith and action.

You're Not What You Used To Be

Knowledge of who you are in Christ is paramount in developing your spiritual life. The Bible uses several terms when speaking of believers such as "new man" and "new creation." These names imply one who has been raised to "walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4). But what does that mean? Put simply: Satan no longer has dominion over your life. He has no authority over you because you belong to Christ. You have been brought out of death into life. Paul explains; "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph 2:2,3). In other words, Satan was our master and ruler—we were slaves without hope. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (vv 4, 5). He released us from our captor granting us freedom to live a new life in Christ.

***KNOWLEDGE OF WHO
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A Life Of Purpose

Since God created you, His plan for your life is a perfect fit. Intimacy with Christ enables you to realize and achieve your purpose in Him. The Bible is your guide and source for truth. Reading and studying it reinforces your spiritual development. Applying the truth, directed by the Holy Spirit, undergirds your journey of growth and maturity.

Navigating With The Truth

Knowing the truth will set us free (John 8:32). This is more than just head knowledge, however—it is practical. "Knowing" in the accurate sense of the word is to hear and to obey the truth, thus bringing about true freedom. This is where real faith begins to take root.

If Satan can rob you of this knowledge, he will keep you in bondage. This, in turn, will prevent you from maintaining intimacy with Christ, therefore, hindering your growth. The result will leave you like a ship without a rudder, tossed about and unable to navigate the twists and turns of life. Remember—*God wants to know you and He has provided all you need to live a godly life.* 2 Peter 1:3, 4 declares: "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great

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promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire." Our oneness with Him coupled with obeying His Word helps us maintain our spiritual readiness. Thus, preventing the likelihood of entrapment in a sinful lifestyle.

The Truth Of The Matter

Let's examine three important truths that are foundational to our spiritual development; *our freedom from the power of sin, our freedom from fear, and our freedom from condemnation*. These are positional truths because of our union with Christ. This is due to the fact that we have been transferred to a new location, spiritually. God "has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:13, 14). They become true for us, in a practical sense, when we believe what God says and then put into practice what we know. A closer examination of each one will help us to see their importance.

Freedom From The Power Of Sin

We can respond to any temptation to sin by saying what God says. Case in point: *We are free from sins power* (Rom. 6:22). This is more than the power of positive thinking or speaking. The Word of truth is brought to bear against the temptation to sin. The Word is "alive and powerful and able to penetrate our soul and spirit and discern the thoughts and intents of our heart" (Heb 4:12). The Bible goes on to say, "the Word performs its work in those who believe it" (1 Thess 2:13), implying that it will accomplish the purpose for which God sent it. Therefore, we are less likely to give in to a new temptation. Our "new self" created in the image of Christ grows stronger as we practice the truth. On the other hand, our "flesh" becomes less susceptible to the draw of sin. Satan may continue to tempt us with worldly enticements but he cannot force us to sin.

***IN REALITY, WE SIN BECAUSE WE CHOOSE
TO - NOT BECAUSE WE HAVE TO.***

The adage, "the devil made me do it," is no excuse for the believer. In reality, we sin because we choose to—not because we have to. We are free to say no and we have the power of Christ to buttress our decision. There is no temptation that God has not given us the ability to overcome (1 Cor. 10:13).

Freedom From Fear

We have also been *set free from the slavery of fear*. Before Christ saved us from sin, we were chained to fear. This is the “modus operandi” of the devil. He does not want you or me to be bold and confident as we live for Christ. Hence, he tries to bring fear into our lives again. But because of His great love for us Christ set us free from the bondage of fear. Romans 8:15 states, “for you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” What a great truth. He goes on to say, “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self control” (2 Tim 1:7). Thus, the Spirit of God brings to light how to be bold, confident, and disciplined while being surrounded by the love of Christ.

Christ loves us with an everlasting love and nothing can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:35). In addition, the Bible says, “there is no fear in love, but perfect love cast out fear” (1 John 4:18). Knowing this enables us to be fearless and courageous in a world dominated by fear. Also, Romans 8:32 expresses, “he who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?” We are so important to Him, He not only saved us—by the gift of His Son, but He also freely gives us all things. He supplies everything we need—in abundance, so that we may overcome any obstacle, including fear, barring us from living righteously and victoriously.

Freedom From Condemnation

We were already condemned to be judged for our sins, prior to knowing Christ, having no hope of eternal life. But because of His love and grace, He pardoned us. *We are no longer under condemnation*. What we were unable to do—to free ourselves from sin and death, God did for us by sending Christ, in the likeness of man, to release us (Rom 8:3). We are now free to walk in the Spirit and not indulge in the passions of the flesh. This is the law of the Spirit of Life (Rom 8:2). It supersedes the law of sin and death that condemned us. Let me illustrate this truth from nature.

We are all familiar with the law of gravity. In its essence the law states: "What goes up must come down." This law affects everything in our life. For example, if you toss a ball into the air, it immediately falls to the ground; lose you balance and gravity will pull you over.

Another law, however, supersedes the law of gravity. It is the law of lift (aerodynamics). When certain requirements are met, gravity can be overcome. An example of this is the flight of an airplane. The requirements needed: Wings and speed. When used together, the airplane will lift off the ground and continue to fly until one or both of the needed criteria are taken away. In a spiritual sense, Christ has given us "wings and speed" to overcome the downward pull of sin and death. Because He is life (Jn 14:6), He overcame death, giving life to all who believe in Him. Thus, lifting us from sin's deadly grip.

In summary, it is God who called us and equips us to live a life that is pleasing to Him. We participate in this new life by cooperating with the Holy Spirit who guides us through the truth of the Word. Since we have been set free from the power of sin and death—it no longer has a grip on us, we can walk with confidence and boldness through Christ who strengthens us.

Chapter 2

FAITH THAT WALKS

"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving"

(Col. 2:6, 7).

The temptation to live apart from the power of God is all too common for most believers. It comes from a misunderstanding of how they are to live by faith after coming to Christ. The emphasis as it relates to our faith is often placed on the salvation event itself. For many, how to live by faith on a daily basis has little merit. Unless we learn how to trust God for everything, we will be ill equipped for the journey of faith.

Don't Be A Busy-Body

A crucial blunder for many believers after salvation is to mistake busyness for spiritual growth; indicating that busyness is the key to developing the character of Christ in them. Nothing could be further from the truth, however. This circumvents God's primary purpose for salvation—His relationship with us. He desires that we “be rooted and grounded and built up in Him” (Col 2:6, 7). Paul emphasized this truth in Eph 3:16-19: “That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Power That Transforms

Several things of significance are stated here; first, that the Spirit of God will strengthen our inner man with power. This is referred to as “the immeasurable greatness of God’s power.” The same power “that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead” (Eph 1:19, 20). In His love, God is extending this tremendous power to us. Without it we cannot operate in the kingdom of God. However, it is not power that can be flaunted before others or power that can be wielded for selfish purposes. It is given so that we may live overcoming, victorious lives that honor Christ. It is, essentially, the strength of God, controlled by the Spirit of God, for the glory of God.

Second, this power is given so that Christ may “dwell in [our] hearts through faith,” (Eph 3:17); more literally, that “He would be at home in us.” This means that He has complete rule and authority over our lives. He provides all the power necessary for us to carry out His plans as we submit to His will and direction. Thus, our faith is strengthened as we obey His leading and depend on Him daily.

He provides all the power necessary for us to carry out His plans as we submit to His will and direction.

The Manifestation of True Love

Third, we are to be rooted and grounded in love. The Bible says that God is love (1 Jn 4:8). This is His essence. When He is at home in us through Christ, we are enveloped in love, filled with love, and empowered by love. Without His love we are nothing. The Bible says without love, we are like “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1). We are just noise and nothing more.

Love is important: as we become rooted and grounded in His love, the life of Christ is manifested through us. “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing,

but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

Faith In Action

Of utmost importance, for all who claim to be followers of Christ, is a clear understanding of our union with Him. The danger is very real that we will trade our walk of faith for sight, and travel the road of "doing it ourselves" as many have done. It is a road of self empowered works and self promotion. Sadly, it is a road that many believers get on and off many times throughout their journey with Christ. Often, the reason is because of a fundamental misconception of how we view the ways of God. We think that we can understand his ways. Because of our finite knowledge, however, we cannot fathom the depths of God's wisdom. For example, He says, "for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9).

Our own natural reasoning can lead us away from what God wants to accomplish through us. It is important that we spend time with Him, in prayer and in His Word, so that He can reveal His will to us. This will insure that we do not engage in self-empowered works. It also strengthens our relationship with Him and helps us to develop our walk of faith.

Jesus illustrates for us the importance of union with the Father in John chapter five. The passage reveals a powerful dynamic between the Father and the Son. It showcases the dependence that Christ has on the Father and His desire not to do anything apart from Him. It also reinforces for us the truth of John 15:5, "apart from Me you can do nothing."

Jesus was in Jerusalem, on the Sabbath, where He encountered a crippled man at the pool of Bethesda. He healed the man who immediately took up his bed and walked. As a result, Jesus was confronted by the Jews, and a controversy arose. They were angry because He was doing the work of His Father (healing) on the Sabbath. John records: But Jesus answered them, My Father is working

until now, and I am working. Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing (Jn 5:17, 19, 20).

We see the unity between Jesus and the Father. Jesus is saying that He can only do works that the Father shows Him to do—that He can do nothing on His own. This is only possible because Jesus is in intimate fellowship with the Father and is able to see what the Father does. We must also position ourselves, in prayer and in the Word, to hear from our Father and then carry out His works, works which He prepared for us to do before the foundation of the world.

The crux of the matter is this: God does not want us to work *for* Him—He wants to do *His work* through us. He called us to do “good works which He prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). Our self-empowered works end up being wood, hay, and stubble: they will not stand the test of fire. But what God does through us will bear fruit for the kingdom (1 Cor. 3:12-15). As we read and study the Word, we gain wisdom and understanding which leads us to fruitful works (Col 1:10). Why does this matter? Because we are to do the works He created for us to do—works that bring honor and glory to Him and Him alone.

A Divine Design

Let’s look at Ephesians 2:10 in more detail. The entire verse says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Notice, we are “His workmanship,” created to be unique in every way. Psalm 139 further develops this truth:

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together In my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, Intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them (vv13-16).

The truth is, God knows everything about us. We may believe that our life began in the womb, but God has clearly shown us that He knew us long before then. Of equal importance, He says we were “intricately woven.” That means He formed and shaped us to be used by Him. Also, all of our days were written in His book—before we were born.

These self evident truths should propel us to into action. How can we not devote ourselves to the cause of Christ and His kingdom knowing that we have been given power and ability by the Holy Spirit to carry out every good work prepared for us.

Continuing to walk in Him is the evidence that we have been established in our faith. Having received Him and having been taught, we should now go forth with a heart of gratitude and a lifestyle of obedience.

Chapter 3

Living--It's All About Christ

*I have been crucified with Christ.
It is no longer I who live, but
Christ who lives in me...*

For to me to live is Christ...

Gal. 2:20 & Phil. 1:21

The verses above were penned by the apostle Paul, one of the most prolific writers of the New Testament. These two verses are a summation of his life in Christ. They should also represent the life of all believers who have been united with Christ through faith.

Only the cross can put to death our motives and impulses that come into conflict with the claims of Christ on our lives. It is, indeed, the instrument to carry out the denial of self. Without understanding our crucifixion with Christ, we will never be able to live a victorious life in Him. Paul makes it clear that our "old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin" (Rom 6:6). This is the truth that makes us free.

Not only were we crucified with Him but we were also raised to walk in a new way (quality) of life with Him. Free from sin's power, free from fear, free from condemnation and free to offer ourselves wholly to Christ and His kingdom work.

This is the normal Christian life--dead to self, alive to Him. An exchanged life--our weakness for His strength. As we yield to Him, He strengthens us with His power so that His life is manifested through us.

Life In Christ

Harold Vaughan, in his publication, "What It Means To Be Crucified With Christ" states; "The co-crucifixion with Christ and death-union with Christ are not the end of the story. They merely serve as the pathway to resurrection and ascension life...The work of the Cross is a completed task. Jesus did it all. Now the Lord waits for His children to enter in by simply appropriating the fullness of Christ by faith" (*Copyright 1985 Christ Life Publications, 32*).

You may be thinking, "Many Christians I know do not live the crucified life that Paul speaks of in Galatians." Although this may be true, the gospel, according to Christ, is a transforming gospel. It is the beginning of a good work that He will bring to its completion. Those who continue to live a life not affected by the power of the gospel, not bearing fruit, not growing in the knowledge of God, not overcoming the self-life and who do not have a love for the Word and the work of God's kingdom, have not been transformed. To say otherwise would be to deny the power of the gospel.

Thus, life in Christ is more than just *saying* that we are believers in Him. It is being established in faith through our knowledge of Him, which comes from the Word of God and bearing fruit in works God has prepared for us. This is the evidence of a life transformed by the power of the gospel.

Talk—*it—thru*

CHAPTER 1

What does it mean to be reconciled to Christ?

What does the term “new creation” in 2 Cor. 5:17 mean?

What does it mean to be free from the power of sin?

Free from fear?

Free from condemnation?

CHAPTER 2

What is the key to walk by faith?

How is Christ “at home” in a believer?

What is the difference between our works and the works of God?

When did God first know us?

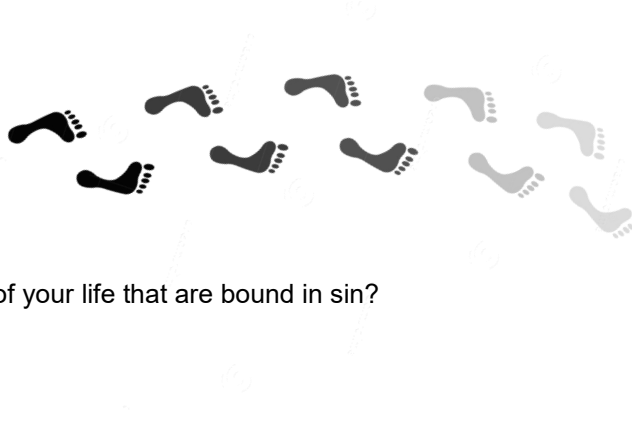
When did God first prepare works for us to do?

CHAPTER 3

What is the normal Christian life?

How is it lived?

Walk—it—out



What are the areas of your life that are bound in sin?

In fear?

In condemnation?

How will you apply the truths of God's Word to set you free?

Since God has already prepared good works for you to do, how will you begin to discover them?

What are some things in your life that have preeminence over Christ?

How will you rearrange your priorities to please Christ?

What are some ways that His life can be expressed through you?

ANSWERS—*Talk-it-through*

CHAPTER 1

What does it mean to be reconciled to Christ?

It means that you are in right standing with Christ. You have been made righteous by Him. You have been brought out of death into life. (See Ephesians 2:1-5)

What does the term “new creation” in 2 Cor 5:17 mean?

It means that you are a new person spiritually. You have been changed from the inside by the Holy Spirit. Satan no longer has dominion over your life. You have been raised to walk in a new way of life (Rom 6:4)

What does it mean to be free from the power of sin?

It means that we have the power through the Holy Spirit dwelling in us to resist the temptation to sin by agreeing with the Word of God—the Word is alive and powerful and it performs its work in those who believe. See Heb 4:12 and 1 Thess 2:13.

Free from fear?

It means that we can walk in confidence with Christ knowing that He has released us from the bondage of fear (Rom 8:15) and He has also given us power and self control through the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 1:7). He surrounds us with His love which enables us to be fearless and courageous.

Free from condemnation?

It means that we have been pardoned by Christ and we will no longer be judged for our sins because Christ has already been judged in our place on the cross. We are free to walk in the power of the Spirit and not indulge in the sinful passions of the flesh.

CHAPTER 2

What is the key to walk by faith?

Maintaining an intimate relationship with Christ that enables Him to “dwell” in us (Eph 3:17 – the word “dwell” means to “be at home” in us) thus providing us with the power necessary to carry out His plans. Our faith is strengthened as we obey His leading and depend on Him daily.

How is Christ “at home” in a believer?

He is “at home” in us as we submit to his rule and authority over our lives.

What is the difference between our works and the works of God?

Our works are things that we want to do for God. The works of God are the works He prepared for us to do before the foundation of the world. Our works are empowered by the flesh. The works of God are empowered by the Spirit of God. Our works will not stand the test of fire (1 Cor 3:12-15). The works of God will bear fruit for the kingdom.

When did God first know us?

He knew us before the world began. Psalm 139 describes how He created us to be unique in every way

When did God first prepare works for us to do?

He created works for us to do before we were born (Eph 2:10). When we came into a relationship with Christ we were given the power and ability by the Holy Spirit to carry out those works.

CHAPTER 3

What is the normal Christian life?

It is an exchanged life—our weakness for His strength; being equipped by Him to fulfill our divine purpose.

How is it lived?

It is lived by faith, believing that God is able to do exceedingly and abundantly more than we can ask or think (Eph 3:20). We trust Him to do what is impossible in our own strength. And we yield ourselves to His control over our lives.