

The Foundation of Growth in Christ: What is Growth In Christ? (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Greg asked me to let you know that we've got our quarterly memory stuff ready to go from Jen.! Thank you, Jennifer, for getting it all ready for us. And 2 Corinthians and Galatians, we got your markers.

These are so cool how you do this. I have a stick. I wear these out because I read, you know, and I stick them in books everywhere. So thank you.

You're welcome. Each quarter on these books. Yes. Yes, it's wonderful. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones. How can you miss with that? All right.

So they're going to be where, Greg? Where do we put them? All three tables. Thank you so much. Okay. Praise the Lord. Let's pray and we'll get started where we left off.

Almighty God and Father, we thank you for your great grace and marvelous mercies that are new every day. And we thank you for those souls who come out on the midweek and prioritize this time to sit with their fellow believers and learn from you.

[1 : 09] Give Greg and I the opportunity to speak into their lives. And provide shepherding care for them through the word of God. Thank you for this evening and for the many blessings we enjoy because you love us and because you're a good and gracious God.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Praise the Lord. All right. Let's see what we have for tonight. You'll remember, for those of you who were here last time, I'm still talking about the foundation of growth in Christ before we move to the next F and talk about that one.

And the big question that we were asking is, what is growth in Christ? That's what we're still working on. This is kind of a lesson two, part two, if you will. What is growth in Christ?

And I challenged you with this. I challenged you by asking if that question was put to you by another person, whether they were a believer or not, but especially if they were a believer.

And this is rhetorical. How would you answer that question? How would you biblically explain in a concise way what growth in Christ is?

[2 : 31] You might talk about what it involves. You might talk about what it isn't. But you have to come to the place where you give them something to hold on to that helps them know when they're doing it.

How do I know when this is happening in my life? Because I get busier at church? Is that what growth in Christ is? I'm busy with religious stuff?

Do you know there's a lot of people who think that? Because I'm religiously busy and religiously minded, I'm growing. I'm spiritually growing.

And let me tell you, after three and a half decades of doing this, that is not the case at all. It's not an automatic thing. So think about what you would do to explain that.

Then I went and I talked to you about ways that we handle helping people who come to our church become more spiritually aware, an awareness, up their awareness, and become more sober minded about the priority of their growth, their spiritual growth, and how we can shepherd them in a way that they take more responsibility for it and become more invested and committed to it.

[3 : 49] Okay? I shared with you the sheet that we use, by the way. Kevin, did that come to you? I don't remember if I... Okay. You're welcome. We can make this sheet available to any of you who might want it.

It's the Genuine Proofs of Salvation worksheet that we tweaked. Greg and I didn't invent that. It was in the MacArthur Study Bible and we just took it and did some things with it and made it into a document that we can use as a worksheet in our counseling ministry.

And I talked to you about why we do that and how we use that sheet to help people assess it. I also shared with you, if you would turn there, 2 Corinthians 13.5, as one verse, one of many verses that admonish and also urge or encourage us in an evaluation of our spiritual self.

Our spiritual self. Whether or not we're in the faith and whether or not we're growing in the faith. That is a responsibility that we have and should take very seriously.

So 2 Corinthians 13.5, Paul ends his letter here, his second letter, with this.

[5 : 10] Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. That is, that you are born again. That you are truly saved and trusting Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.

And what he means here, you are walking with Him. Examine yourselves. Or do you not recognize this about yourself, that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you fail the test?

So Paul knew these people and he was encouraging them to give a careful look into their spiritual life. Who are you in Christ?

Are you in Christ? And I shared with you that some of the people that we had worked with, 11 to be precise, that we have on our records, in each case, they came in saying that they were born again only to come to realize they weren't.

And the way that that happened was being involved in the life of our church. They just, they came, they were taught, they listened, they interacted, they fellowshiped with other believers.

[6 : 21] And as they did that, they recognized there were some differences and it gave them, I would say, cause for pause. And through one thing after another, one of two things happened.

They either approached us to ask about that or we sought them out and asked about it. And there were some of that because we're shepherds and we're not afraid to be proactive.

And so in a few cases, we went to them and asked if we could meet with them. And then it went from there. Now, where I left off with you last time was the parable of the soils in Mark chapter four.

So we're going to go back there and read that together. And then I'm going to walk you through some exercises here to help you understand what's going on with you as a Christian in your walk with God and in your growth, your spiritual growth in Christ's likeness as to why you continue to sin.

All right, but first, let's look at Mark chapter four beginning in verse 13. Once again, beloved, Jesus is now giving an explanation to the parable of the soils.

[7 : 41] He told the parable and now he's going to explain the different elements of the parable that went over the heads of most of these people.

And so in verse 13, he said to them, do you not understand this parable? Because he realized they didn't. On the whole, they did not. Well, how will you understand all the parables if you can't understand one that seems to be as plain as this one?

The sower sows the word. So the seed in this example, this analogy, is the word of God, the truth. And it's being sown in the soil of their hearts.

These are the ones who were beside the road where the word is sown. And when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.

In a similar way, these are the ones on whom seed was sown. So the word of God is being sown in their heart. And it falls on rocky heart, a hard heart, who when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy.

[8 : 53] And then they have no firm root. Because it's hard, it doesn't take root in their heart. It's only temporary.

And when affliction or persecution arises, when their profession starts costing them, when their church attendance starts costing them, when the followership starts cutting into their priorities in life, then what does it say?

Affliction or persecution arises because of the word, because of the truth, immediately they fall away. So they were never saved in the first place.

These first two, they were never saved. They didn't lose their salvation. Then there were others in verse 18. They're the ones on whom seed was sown, sown in their heart or on their heart among thorns.

Now, these are the ones who've heard the word. So in each case, they're hearing the truth through preaching or teaching or evangelism of some kind. But the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word and it becomes unfruitful.

[10 : 16] All these people then are not saved. They're not born again. They're not true believers, even though they can on the outside and for a season give this false evidence of being saved.

They can sound like you. They can look like you. They can do the kinds of things you do as you live your life with the Lord. But let these three different situations come into their life and they're exposed for what they really are.

Now, this has happened in a number of cases as we've worked with people and they've made these professions and then we take them back through their life using the Scripture as the measure.

The Scripture helps us take out the bias. The Scripture helps us dig down into the root, the joint and the marrow of who they really are. That's what the living word does.

Hebrews 4.12 and 13. And as that exercise happens, they have one of two choices because the Scripture doesn't lie. It's going to expose the reality of their lifestyle.

[11 : 23] Not just what they say, but how they've lived. And when that doesn't match up with a person who's growing in the Lord, they have one of two choices.

They can either receive the truth of the Word and repent, or they can get stubborn and hard-hearted and walk away. And that has happened. Unfortunately, that has happened.

Even recently. So this is the parable of the soils and it helps us better understand the different aspects of this issue of growth in Christ and why some people can actually begin to show it and then down the road, at some point, that all falls apart.

And we understand that's not because they lost their salvation. They never had it in the first place. Okay, are we all tracking with all that? Is that good? Pretty straightforward, huh?

In the Scriptures? Okay. So now we pick it up and I want to spend some time tonight clarifying the spiritual foundation for spiritual growth, answering this particular question.

[12 : 31] What happens when a person comes to believe in and confess Jesus as their Savior and Lord? Now what I'm asking here is what happens to them in them?

What change takes place in them so that we can better understand what they're growing from? Because if you don't have what we're going to talk about tonight, you can't grow in it.

It's very important for Christians to get this correct. Or when they sin, and they will, they're going to think that they have to earn God's favor and forgiveness.

Somehow they have to convince God that He needs to forgive them again. I promise I won't do it again, and then I do it again. And they get into these cycles like this, and it's very, very unhealthy.

So we need to understand what has changed. Is it permanent? Is it temporary? And what does it have to do with our growth in the Lord? In the instant, the very instant, the megasecond that you trust Jesus to forgive you for your sins, you understand that that is a miracle of God's grace.

[13 : 46] In both your sanctification of salvation and your sanctification of spiritual growth, it is of the Holy Spirit, not you. You participate in your spiritual growth, but you do not cause it.

God causes your salvation, and God causes by the Spirit your growth. You can participate in your spiritual growth.

What do you bring to your salvation? Sin. Sin. Lostness. Blindness. Deceit. Need. Okay?

So, first of all, the instant you trust Jesus to forgive you for your sins, which is a work of the Holy Spirit, your soul is brought from spiritual death to spiritual life in that very instant.

You are made as alive in the Spirit as you can possibly be. Now, you will grow in your understanding of living by the Spirit, but you get all the Spirit you're going to get when you're saved.

[14 : 59] You don't get more of the Spirit in increments. That is the teaching of the charismatic doctrine, and it is unbiblical. I'm saying the quiet part out loud because many people get trapped in this and think that they have to get these recurring fillings with the Holy Spirit because they lose some of it.

Folks, we don't have a God like that. He's not cheap. He's not chintzy. He's not like us. He doesn't dole it out in little bits and tell you, come back later and I'll give you a little more and maybe a cookie with it.

That's not God, is it? That's not the Lord. You get all of the Holy Spirit. You get all of the Lord. The Lord wants you to have when you come to trust Jesus and God does the miracle of saving your soul.

Your soul is brought from spiritual death to spiritual life, from separation from God to being brought near to God. Now, in session three, I'm going to spend the entire time in a couple of passages showing you this transaction and deepening our, hopefully, our love and gratitude to God for what this is.

We'll talk about a little bit of it tonight. When you become a Christian, you don't start your same life over again. In that moment, a radical, eternal, the deepest of deep changes takes place in your soul.

[16 : 42] your spiritually dead soul is changed the instant you believe from that death and separation to life and nearness.

By God's power, He makes your soul spiritually alive to God in Christ and in that moment, God gives you that new spiritual life. You are not, as a Christian, trying to gain more and more new spiritual life as you go through your walk with the Lord.

You get all the new life you can get when you're saved. Now, what you're doing after you're saved is you are growing up in that new life.

You're not getting more of it. You're growing up in it. You're becoming more of who God has made you to be as a new creature in Christ. You don't know how to be that.

Christ. You're a new creature in Christ who's learning how to be what God has now transformed you to be. You're growing into your new skin. You're learning to get comfortable with the new you.

[17 : 51] You're learning to deal with the habits that want to come back and camp out. And you tell them get lost. That's not me anymore. Amen? Amen. So we're not over here trying to continue to get God on our side because we continue to sin and we're worried that God's going to get frustrated and impatient with us and finally say you know what you're pretty hopeless after all.

See ya. There are people who live like this in their life as a Christian every day thinking they need to get God on their side because of their sin and nobody's ever really helped them understand what this is all about.

Notice what we have here on the screen then in the way of this scripture. Therefore he said a lot before the therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creature.

Full stop. He's a new creature. The old things passed away. behold new things have come and now all these things are from God.

This is the work of God. God doesn't go back on his work. This is all from the Lord. This is permanent. So your soul's condition in relationship to God has changed entirely.

[19 : 25] you are not the same soul person you once were. You should have heard the Polish try to translate that one. So that your old soul self that they stopped right there.

I said in your old soul self and I looked at my translator and he went I said come on man you can do it you can do it grab that I knew I knew when I did this I said I knew this one might be a challenge but it's worth trying because this communicates your old soul self is done away with and your new soul self is now put into right relationship with God you didn't keep your old soul and it got cleaned up and now you're trying to get your old soul revved up enough to do the right thing no friends you got you're a new creature in Christ well where did the new happen where did you become a new creature in Christ you look the same you probably kept living a lot the same you wore the clothes you had in your closet you drove the car you were driving the minute before you came to

Christ you lived in the same family probably and so there was a lot of things that didn't change what did your soul the condition of your soul in relationship to God went from death to life and you became a new creature made alive in Jesus Christ precious precious blood this is the miracle of the new birth so we're not talking about your old soul self anymore I'm going to show you what Paul says about that old soul self now here's the tricky part and the trip up part and brothers and sisters again I tell you and I say things like this because this is what I do for a living and this is what I've done my entire adult life and I came to the place long ago where seeing this happen to my brothers and sisters in different churches in different ministries and even now in different places in the world it is just so heartbreaking to me that Christians are not taught this stuff they come into churches and they're revved up with high octane music that looks more like a rock band and a rock concert than anything else and then they hear the pastor get up and tell a bunch of stories and maybe read from the headlines and make everybody laugh and feel really good and want to come back but they don't get any substance to help them navigate the issues of life and I'm not dissing on my brothers

I did this at one point in my early ministry I didn't know better I didn't know how to use the word I didn't know the importance of theology and doctrine for meeting the issues of life head on and how to please Jesus in all of it but once you start learning that and seeing there's no going back to all that and so what I share with you now I'm careful to share because in so many places it's not being taught in fact what I'm sharing with you now tends to run people off more than it tends to keep them I'm just being very open with you now so you might say to me at this point with this old soul self getting replaced with this new soul self and the power of Jesus you might say but Jeff as a Christian sometimes I feel and sometimes I behave like my old soul self now what's that

I still face the same temptations I had before I was a Christian in many ways you hear testimonies of people that say before I got saved I was a drunk I haven't had any alcohol in Jesus delivered me praise the Lord right but for most of us who didn't have a drug problem or an alcohol problem we bring a lot of the old patterns over into our new life right you got a new soul but you still live in the same place with the same people and then you got to deal with you and I understand that I still deal with some of the same sinful habits the same sinful desires I had before you might say why is that does that mean I'm not a Christian well it could but it doesn't have to be that we're going to talk more about this in another lesson but for now I want to I want you to just listen to what the apostle Paul explains about this very real dilemma that we all deal with day to day as

[24 : 35] Christians no Christian escapes what I'm teaching you right now every Christian has to deal with this okay it's the reality when you read the New Testament you see letter after letter after letter dealing with these very things in fact Mitch asked a question last time that I answered in that way when you read the New Testament you see so many of the letters answering this struggle I'm a Christian but I still sin and sometimes I sin in patterns that I don't seem to be able to break and it frustrates me it makes me doubt my salvation I feel lonely in it come Sunday you're going to hear more about that alright and how saving faith battles that very dilemma we're kind of you're kind of getting a double whammy for those of you who come on Wednesday night you're very brave souls to get a double whammy so what does the apostle

Paul say it's from Ephesians look up here on the screen and I'll put it up on the deal here in reference then he says to your now notice former manner of life the old soul self you lay aside that self which is being corrupted in accordance with deceitful lusts and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new self which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth now what we're saying in this passage is this your unbelieving soul once belonged to Satan to do his will and you pursued your own selfish desires not a person in this room can say that that was not true of them to some degree or another the degree to which you express this reality about you is not the point let me say this again and

I'm going to put part of it up on the screen for you please hear this your unbelieving soul your old soul self once belonged to Satan to do his will you were captive or imprisoned in your sin to Satan to do his will whether you realized it or not isn't the point and you pursued your own selfish desires out of that state of sinfulness now look on the screen the degree to which you expressed this sinful reality about you is not the point that's a lot of Christians well I'm not as bad as that one I wasn't as bad as this guy or this woman or I didn't go that far that is not the point the point is that in your old soul self you belong to Satan and you live to do his will whether you knew it or not now some people express a horrible history of this old soul

Satan owned spiritual rebellion you know them I know! I've heard stories you've heard the stories you may be one of them that has a horrible past like that some people who have the same lostness of soul express that sinfulness to a lesser degree and again that isn't the point the degree to which your old life sin is not the issue the issue is your old life sin and one sins enough to get you to hell so we all have the same lostness of soul because we all need the same remedy we all turn to the same person to remedy the same disease sinful sinful issue and the remedy being the same tells us we all have the same condition that needs to be healed so degree is not the issue so when people come to me and say I have this friend

I have this child adult child I have this person in my life and my heart breaks for them but they have sinned so bad and they are so bad I've!

[29 : 02] hope and I say oh no degree is not the issue the lostness of their soul is the lostness of their soul how they're expressing it can render horrific consequences for them for the rest of their lives in certain ways but it doesn't have to keep them from coming to Christ because the miracle working power of the Lord is the miracle!

working power okay these are important things! that we need to realize the same lostness of soul even if it's to a lesser degree is the issue that we're all dealing with when we move from our old soul self to our new soul self and I want to share some scriptures with you if you go to Ephesians there are so many places in the Bible not just the New Testament that speak to this Ephesians and what it's speaking to is the manifestations of the old soul self how what what kinds of things are we talking about when we're living in unbelief what would we expect to see and experience so Ephesians chapter 4 beginning in verse 17 so this I say and affirm together with the Lord that you walk no longer that you relate to each other and to the Lord no longer just as the

Gentiles also walk or live alright so don't don't continue to live and behave like an unbeliever Gentiles were categorized as unbelievers and what is this list that he gives here that characterizes unbelievers and their relationship toward God well they live in the futility of their mind futility means emptiness uselessness being darkened in their understanding so that is moral darkness they do not have the mental acuity and ability to grasp the spiritual and moral issues of life being darkened in their understanding excluded from the life of God they're separated from God why because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart and they having become this calloused hard hearted ignorant foolish person have given themselves then over to what sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness so he compounds the issue here these are people who are so self absorbed and self focused there is no limit to what they are capable of doing and will do in pursuing their own pleasure they will forfeit anything they will give up everything they will hurt anyone to get what they want and he says in this condition they are ultimately foolish these people are the ultimate fools on the face of the earth living in this manner in

Galatians if you turn back one book here before Ephesians Galatians 5 I can wear you out tonight showing you these but I did want to show you enough to let you know that this is a major problem that the Bible addresses you have another list that Paul offers here and it is being offered in contrast to what it means to walk with the Lord and display the character of Christ but first he gives you this list from Galatians 5 19 now the deeds of the flesh are evident which are immorality impurity sensuality idolatry sorcery enmities strife jealousy outbursts of anger disputes dissensions factions envying drunkenness carousing and things like these of which

I forewarn you just as I have already forewarned you that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God and then he gives you a very different list in the next couple of verses again that reflect the work of the Holy Spirit in a transformed renewed!

[34 : 08] chapter 1 Paul again he's really good at these lists 1 Timothy chapter 1 looking at verse 8 but we know that the law is good now the law here is the moral law of God the moral code of right and wrong living and he says we know that's good it came from the Lord we need to be told what's right and wrong if one uses it lawfully realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person we don't need the law because we're righteous if we were righteous why would we need to be told what was wrong we'd always be doing the right but for those who are lawless and rebellious like us so here we have first of all we're lawless people we're criminals we're rebellious people that is we're prideful the law is for the ungodly and sinners for the unholy and profane do you see the power of these words to describe what we are in our old soul selves for those who kill their fathers or mothers didn't

I tell you that there's nothing stop at for murderers these are people who go into churches and shoot each other indiscriminately and then burn the church to the ground because they can't stand Mormons immoral these are these are Hamas butchers who bake babies alive in ovens it's just it's sickening yes it could be yes these are people who murder and immoral men and homosexuals and kids we can't afford to allow homosexuality to be normalized with us we can love the homosexual and pray for that person to be delivered from the sin I hope we would be compassionate and gentle hearted and understanding and patient and kind but what we cannot do is make it look like these people are part of our society and it's as normal for them to get married and have children as it is for anybody else that's a lie that's a deception it says here these people are headed straight to hell immoral people homosexuals kidnappers liars perjurers and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching everything else that goes against the sound teaching of the scriptures scriptures about what constitutes a new soul self walking with

Jesus let me give you one more because I've used this passage in the gospel of Mark in chapter seven to answer the question where does sin come from and those of you who've been around me long enough now know that I've used this passage a number of times to take people to the Bible where Jesus is explaining the answer to the question where does sin come from when we sin where does it emanate from and so let's pick it up in verse 18 Mark 7 18 and Jesus said to them are you so lacking in understanding also now he's having to do the same thing as with the soils they're not understanding the parables that he's teaching here do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him because it does not go into his heart it goes into his stomach they were arguing about clean and unclean food and what it does to make you impure and unclean religiously and

Jesus saying you know you've got this all wrong and backwards it isn't stuff that you eat already unclean before you eat it because you have an unclean heart what you eat goes into your stomach and it's eliminated that's not the issue verse 20 and then Jesus was saying that which proceeds out that is from within that is what defiles the man for from within out of the heart of men proceed and then look at this list evil thoughts fornication thefts murders adulteries deeds of coveting wickedness as well as deceit sensuality envy slander pride foolish and all these evil things proceed from within and defile the person or corrupt them so these things prove the inner corruption they come from within nobody put them in you you're not a victim like that nobody made you sin you sin out of your heart every time nobody makes you sinfully mad you can't oh you make me so mad we've picked that up from the world no you choose to respond in anger or lust or greed well if she wouldn't dress like that

I wouldn't lust there is not a man in here who would listen to that mess and swallow it right brother there ain't no way we all know the truth about that they could find a way to lust this is the need of our heart and it's a desperate need to whatever degree you expressed your sinfulness in your old soul self the passages we're talking about here describe you in the condition of your heart toward the Lord in unbelief these are descriptors of people in unbelief now you say but Jeff I know I have committed some of these sins after being a Christian and I know some people in my life who told me that they struggle with some of these things as a Christian right isn't that true so what's this all about the point here is that your soul was still lost to sin whether or not you say well of all those lists

[40 : 41] I've only done four of those okay and some of you others sat there and again that's not the point your soul is lost to sin and the sins of your former life separated you from life with God so I'll put this up here spiritual death keeps your soul in darkness and this spiritual darkness is why unbelievers suffer in spiritual blindness you need to see that connection because you've asked yourself how can they read this I read this how can they read this and not see it how can they not see that what they're doing is destroying their lives and everybody around them why do they keep running back to their own vomit this is the answer because they live in spiritual darkness they're spiritually blind it's not that they don't know it's wrong their conscience bears witness against them that it's wrong but they suppress it they push it down why because they love their life of sin or they wouldn't do it do you know you have never sinned because you didn't want to do it

I don't want to do this I don't want to do this oh I did it you! do you more aware and more spiritually attuned to those sins so I can repent alright that was your former life so why do you still sin in what you think say and do very important that we understand

Paul is talking about former life when he gives us these kinds of lists he usually follows them up very quickly with the marks of true Christianity true Christian growth and walking with Jesus compassion kindness love peace self control as a Christian you're believing soul being made alive to God you still live with your memories don't you did you just forget your past when you got saved you still live with your past experiences did all the things that you used to do just go away from your your conscious awareness and just disappear overnight you still have a past you got to do something with that you still have consequences of your old self perhaps strained relationships bad decisions things that you might have to live with the rest of your life alright so listen here's the point up on the screen there is a spiritual past tense truth about you about every one of us and there is a spiritual present tense truth about you as well in terms of your past what you were your former spiritual self your old soul self before you truly believed on

Christ for the forgiveness of your sins you were dead to God in your trespasses and sins you were under God's holy anger his wrath had you died in that condition you would have stood before the Lord to be judged and condemned and we don't want that let's look at Ephesians again and let's look at the difference maker and the difference he's made Ephesians chapter four we're back to the same place where we were reading that terrible list about futile minds and darkened hearts and hard hearts and all that and now we're going to come to what Paul says right after that list in verse 20 but you did not learn

Christ in this way this isn't Jesus that list isn't Jesus has nothing to do with the Lord Jesus except that he conquered it all for you if indeed you have heard him that is the gospel and have been taught in him you've come and made yourself teachable and humble before him just as truth is in Jesus!

[46 : 04] that in reference to your former old soul self manner of life you lay aside that old self which is being corrupted in accordance with the lust of deceit and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new self which in the likeness of God has been created in righteous holiness of the truth now that passage is not talking to you as a Christian about something you need to do as a Christian it's talking about you being made a Christian and what has happened to you this is a description of what happened when you got saved and he's putting it in the language that helps you own it in the moment you got saved you laid aside the old self and got a new one by the miracle working power of God you don't have to in the spirit of your mind because you were given a spiritual mindedness in order to grasp the spiritual truths that you can now own in

Christ he gave them to you when you got saved now you just need to learn what they are you have a whole treasure trove of spiritual truth to live by you just need to learn what they are and then you need people to help you learn how to appropriate them and how to apply them in your life to help you overcome the things that were overcoming you in your old soul self this is a whole new proposition so the passage I just read to you is not a passage for Christians to apply in their Christian life on a daily basis trying to do all these things these are past tense realities about your new identity this all got laid aside and you were renewed in the spirit of your mind to be a new self created in the image of the Lord Jesus Christ this is a wonderful union so in terms of your present reality remember

I told you you had a past tense truth about you and a present tense truth about you in terms of your present reality when God brought your heart to respond to him the moment you laid aside the old unsaved self to put on the new spiritual self by spiritual union to Jesus people can get uptight about coming to a place where we use this kind of phrase phraseology and terminology union to Christ union to Jesus is the greatest spiritual reality we can talk about without being union to Jesus in the miracle working power of God there is no new life there is no hope for power over sin that spiritual union is just that in the moment you believe God in his miracle working power in ways that you and I cannot possibly grasp now we can only do what

I'm doing now that's about as far as we can go right now but it's enough it's enough or he wouldn't have told us you were spiritually joined unioned to Jesus so there's no daylight between you and Jesus there's no place where he starts and ends that you are not starting and ending that's how union you are and there's nothing nothing that can ununion you now that's what you grow from and that's what you grow into you don't grow more of this you got all of this that you can get you got all the union you need and can get so now what are you growing into you're growing into this new creature and the way you express this reality you're learning to express who you are as a new creature you're learning to be this this new identity this new entity you don't need more of this you're not growing to be more of this this is all you get all of it you get when you get saved now you're just growing to be more consistent in who

God's made you to be you're growing out of this from this to reflect what God's made you to be in himself so you learn to take on more and more of the character of Jesus in the way that you think speak and behave you become like your teacher Jesus said you with me when we get this mixed up it's really ugly and depressing and lonely and frustrating and you'll get very angry because you'll constantly feel like you've got to circle back around and lay aside the old self and put on the new self when that's already a past tense reality and you've got to get God on your side again and you've got to convince God that you're serious this time etc etc etc you've got to do penance you all of these things are ways!

[51 : 38] we! express a lack of understanding about who we are in Christ and what it means to grow in Him I see it all the time it's epidemic it just is alright so this is what I've been talking about is what Paul is describing in Ephesians 4 about your conversion from this former unbeliever those are the verses to this now new self which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth that's what you've been created in as you've been union to Jesus you've been given his righteousness now you're going to learn to live out that righteousness you're going to learn how to express it how to daily as it were put it on and wear it okay that's what that's what we're learning how to do and sometimes we do it poorly people walk up and say yeah your collar's all wonky dude let me help you with this new self collar thing going on here you know okay thanks a lot brother appreciate that that's awesome that's we're wearing new clothes now we have new spiritual clothes to wear and sometimes the buttons aren't you know we gotta get your buttons lined up here dude right

I don't mean to make light of it I'm just trying to let you know this is this is the reality of even the language that Paul uses put on put off okay as this new spiritual person your spiritual progress in Christ involves you in the spiritual process of learning to do what is already true of you in relationship to Jesus I just want you to soak that up for a second because it's a really good way to say this those P words are important you're a new person you are involved in this new spiritual progress it is a progress in the Lord that involves you in a process you are progressing as a new person in a process so you are learning you are learning you have not arrived and you will never arrive on this planet you will never arrive at the place where you're done with sin on this planet that will not happen you cannot get to the place where you never sin and what you're trying to do is learn to live in the truth of what

God has made you to be in his son the only thing getting in the way is the fact that you're still living in a broken world around broken people and you still that's next I want to get to it real quickly here if you'll look at 1 John chapter 3 I'll give you a little bit more ammunition before I move on here 1 John chapter 3 I think you'll see the tie in and we'll read verses 8 and 9 this is a little bit enigmatic but we can take it apart real quickly the one who practices sin now I want you to zero in on that word practices the one who practices sin is of the devil for the devil has sinned from the beginning the son of God appeared for this purpose to destroy the works of the devil so no one who is born of

God practices sin because his seed abides in him his is capitalized God's seed abides in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God now when you hear that it's not immediately intuitive what it's telling you because you're sitting there going but I do sin and I do have Jesus I am saved but I do sin but it says here that people who are born of God do not sin they do not practice sin because he's born of God so what's going on here what's he talking about in verse 8 in the first part of!

8!! the one who practices sin is of the devil for the devil has sinned from the beginning we're talking here about someone who makes a practice of sinning this is a lifestyle of sinning this is unbelief these are people who are not concerned with the glory of God they're not concerned with broken heartedness over wrongdoing in their life they just don't want the consequences and they don't want to get caught but they're not concerned about God now look this is the number one giveaway when I deal with people who profess Jesus and then we start talking about their life and if they ever get honest and they tell me about their lifestyle and it looks like they're living for hell I've got some red flags and so I'm going to bring them right here and I'm going to show them people who have a lifestyle of sinning and are more concerned about how that sin affects them than how it affects

[57 : 36] God they need to be concerned about their soul's condition and then hopefully they'll respond to that and we'll take them through these exercises together okay huge red flag the other part of the verse here in verse nine all he's saying is this no one who is truly saved can make a lifestyle of sinning because you're under conviction from the spirit you have a conscience that's growing sensitive to the Lord and to the spirit leading and you can't continue in long lifestyle seasons of sin as a Christian and not have this troubled spirit about it it won't work do you know this have you experienced this okay all of us probably should have because we've all had times when we've sinned and we should have at some point rather immediately or a little later said you know what that's that

I can't I can't do this I can't do this well an unbeliever is nothing like that if they say I shouldn't do this or I can't do this it doesn't have anything to do with being connected to God because they're not alive to God so that's off the table there's something else going on it's getting in the way of something else they want more now I know that was the case with me okay hopefully this is making sense so in one sense you are learning to lay aside the thinking and habits of your old soul self you are learning to do that you are learning to put off deceitful lusts you are being in some sense renewed in the spirit of your mind as long as you understand that all of that in terms of your old soul self is a past tense reality now you're learning to grow into that and make that more of a habit of how you think and speak and live but here's the thing you do all of this now please look at the screen and see this you do all of these things in relationship with

Jesus first and you do it in the context of church life if you're not there's something wrong if you're not living out this new soul self in these new practices of learning the character of Jesus if you're not doing that in relationship with the Lord and in the context of church life something's wrong there is no such thing as Christians who sit out here and tell me we haven't been to church in years it's not even on our radar we worship at home I have heard that so many times and you talk about a red flag that flies up in my heart for them that they don't have any more love and concern and sense of urgency for God's people than that and they want to tell me they love Christ Christ died for the church that needs to be a little bit of a priority in our lives there are all kinds of ways this stuff comes out in half the time you don't even realize it so you share in the lives of others who like you are battling sin while walking with

Christ you're sitting in a room full of those people right now and you have one speaking to you right now you still live with you still live around broken sinful people in a broken sinful world most importantly you still have now listen you still have your own sin operating in your heart that you need to deal with we call this indwelling sin theologians refer to this as indwelling sin or remaining sin you still have sin in your heart you still have a propensity to follow deceitful desires from your heart you're not in heaven yet this is all over scripture let me give you just a couple places go to Romans with me real quickly if you would Romans 6 20 for when you were slaves of sin you were free in regard to righteousness the point here is you were slaves to sin you were free in regard to righteousness therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed!

the outcome of these things is death but now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God you derive your benefit resulting in holiness sanctification and the outcome eternal life the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ he is going to have to tell us in this passage in Romans chapter 6 in verse 12 do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lust and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness but present yourselves to God as those alive why does he have to tell!

[62 : 58] us that? Because we're still dealing with sin it's still around it didn't just get all zapped out of us did it? Alright so is there anybody in here courageous enough right now and honest enough to raise your hand to this question how many of you in the room still battle sin?

Alright okay I hope you looked around a little bit we're we're all we are we are if that's not the case for you don't come Sunday because you don't need to hear what I have to say we all need this if you look at 1 John 1 John these are some of the classic passages that theologians will throw out to teach on indwelling sin remaining sin 1 John chapter 1 verse 8 if we say that we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us that's true even after we're saved otherwise he wouldn't go on to tell us that for those of us who confess our sin

God is faithful to do what to forgive us and cleanse us right you know early in my ministry I had a man come to me who had been taught by another man in the church who thought he was a theologian that you can get to the point where you no longer sin and he needed he told this man you need to stop confessing your sins and talking about your sin and get to the place where you just don't do it anymore and you put it out of your mind and he came to me and said how do I do that and so you can imagine where that conversation went yeah all right and how about chapter 2 verse 1 my little children I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin and if anyone sins!

Jesus Christ the righteous he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world but the classic passage on all of this that most people have read or turned to and I had recently a new convert in our church send me this precious text that was just the text was almost shaking with the enthusiasm and excitement I could hear in this person's voice as they texted me some screenshots of Romans 7 and said this is me this is me you know I understand this now and it was just a precious thing that this person was being encouraged that this is in the Bible and there is hope Romans 7 beginning in verse 14 for we know that the law is spiritual but

I am of flesh sold into bondage to sin you see where I got that from earlier when I said you were imprisoned to Satan to do his will you were sold into bondage to sin for what for what I am doing I do not understand for I am not practicing what I would like to do but I am doing the very thing I hate but if I do the very thing I do not want to do I agree with the law confessing that the law is good so now no longer am I the one doing it but sin which dwells in me for I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh well

[67 : 28] I find then the principle that evil is present in me there you go the one who wants to do good for I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man but I see a different law in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members now you go back to Romans 6 and you see why he said that wretched man that I am who will set me free from the body of this death thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord so then on one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God but on the other with my flesh the law of sin that's the conflict within do you feel it you feel the tension it's just dripping with it that's why you sin as a Christian you still have to fight sin sin is still ever present Satan is still very much alive as a spiritual infant you need to be nourished on the milk and the meat you need to learn to transition from milk to spiritual meat how do you do that you sit down at the table and you start eating meat so when you come to a church like this if you're not used to sitting down for an hour plus and listening to verse by verse unpacking and stuff like that you listen and you come back and you get some more and you take away and you chew on what you can you don't try to get all that you're hearing and stuff it in and walk out ready to yeah you don't do that you learn to listen in a way where as you listen and you're going down through and you're checking something

God is going to use and you're going to be able to grab it it's going to hit or it's going to inspire or encourage it's going if that's what you have I want to see all of us walk and I say what are you doing I'm holding on you told me to hold on I got it I'm going home with it that's what we want and that's what you eat on then maybe what you do is you take the sermon and you listen to it again and maybe you sit down with your family and you do a devotional on one little part of it maybe the part that convicted you that inspired you that encouraged you that informed you that educated you and that that's how you own it you got to walk out of here and find a way to take what you heard and what God is using and make it useful applicable in your life as soon as you can and it's more likely give it away to somebody else share it with somebody else sit down with your family your wife your husband your friend girlfriend go to coffee and show up with it tell them the agenda we're taking part of

Pastor Jeff's sermon and I want to talk about it I want to see what you think you want the notes I'll send them to you the whole kit! and caboodle You can have them this is how we learn and grow we need to be nourished so that we can grow up into spiritual adulthood friends you are in a spiritual fight and you need spiritual nutrition spiritual weapons and plenty of spiritual ammo and that takes diligence and effort and work and striving this stuff right here this is how you ammo up so that you're ready at a moment's notice to bring these weapons out and do business against sin if you're not hiding this in your heart you're doing yourself a terrible injustice if not this get your own program that's fine as long as you're taking it in okay let me do just a couple more things now that you've spiritual life in the

Lord you need a steady diet of biblical spiritual nourishment leading to spiritual growth in the Lord and having been regenerated reborn redeemed these are all the words we use to new life by grace through faith in Christ you need to grow up into who God has saved you to be in your new relationship with his son the penalty of sin has been paid for you and the power of sin has been broken for you so does sin still remain yes but it is no longer in dominion over you sin is no longer your master you don't have to obey it you don't have to you choose to but Christ broke the power of it dominating you he broke it that's the union union with Jesus made that reality for you and you're learning to grow up into that now can you see how when you hear this on a Sunday you can take just that one little paragraph right there and take it home and sit down and do a devotional and you got an hour plus of stuff like that you could use and one sermon would last you a month if you want to make use of it we don't lack for the resources you see it's just making use of them and please don't hear me bragging on me

I'm bragging on the word I'm just preaching the word I'm just trying my best to give you Greg tries his best to give you the truth but what you do with it is up to you so growing up in Jesus involves you in a spiritual position and in a spiritual process and there is a danger for you to avoid in your spiritual growth related to these two realities about you hear me now there is a danger for you to avoid and please hear on a solid base that's your that's your union with Jesus you've been given a spiritual foundation that is unshakable foundations going nowhere he's the rock he's the foundation that's not the issue at all but what is the issue listen again now on the rock of Jesus character in you and on Jesus promises for you you couldn't be on more solid ground so here's the thing

[74 : 28] I want you to have to earn anything wait a minute Jeff nothing in my spiritual life no you don't have to earn anything if you find it in scripture you bring it to me where you have to earn any aspect of the spiritual merit you receive in Jesus Christ you do not have to get Jesus to love and forgive you to be patient with you or to convince Jesus that you really belong to him sin will make you feel like all of that is nonsense it will make you feel like you're not even saved your spiritual position defines what you grow from and what you grow to express but your spiritual process defines!

how you are to grow into who! you are in Christ do you see that this is gold folks your spiritual position defines what you grow from and what you grow to express that never changes your position cannot change God fixed you in it and it cannot change however your spiritual process and progress goes like this doesn't it yep the process we're talking about the progress you made that defines how you're to grow into who you are in the Lord you will see some people are very spiritually mature and you see other people who are not so much and let me tell you years in the Lord is not always the issue I'm 30 years in the Lord and you see I'm not very mature kind of thing I'm three years in the Lord and people say boy they are wiser than their years do you know now what the difference is go ask them when you find a spiritually mature person like that go ask them hey how did this happen in your life oh

I don't know I just woke up one day and it was all there no of course not spiritual sweat man you don't have to earn anything in your position get you fixed if you get these mixed up these last two statements if you get them mixed up you are going!

you are going to feel frustrated you are going to feel discouraged about your lack of spiritual maturity and we don't want that alright now what questions or comments do you have that we could clarify if you have anything that's personal about this I'll be happy to stick around and all that but by the way will you pray for Suzanne she had to go home we started here and a stone hit her and I started to turn around and she said wait we'll let me see if I can push through it and she couldn't so we'll pray for her but I can hang around because she's left so any questions or anything I've thrown a lot at you huh you see why I broke this up now I taught all this in one lesson in Poland with a translator but I told Greg I here I can get away with that here all right what questions do you have nope you're either too afraid to ask or

I did a really good job insights what encouraged you everything we'll praise the Lord spiritual sweat brother that encouraged you good no booster required I love that we're going to get a shirt for that no booster required Jesus is enough you got all you needed in Jesus isn't it wonderful to be part of a ministry where that is constantly kept the main thing him him not the preacher stories or personality or drama but him Jesus and him crucified buried and raised again well God bless you guys thank you for coming tonight more to come now

[79 : 12] I'm going to put Greg on the spot for just a second because we need to tell you just some things that prevented us from meeting this week next Wednesday did we decide so I can tell them next Wednesday are we are we not I don't think so either so okay Greg and I will talk and let you know Sunday what next I'll be gone to Vermont and hopefully you'll be praying for me because they have a full schedule for me we hit the ground on Wednesday and Thursday it starts and we're doing something every day sometimes multiple until I preach on Sunday after I preach they take a quick break they all come back they want to do a Q&A; on Sunday with the whole church and then we rush to the airport and have to be on the plane at three to get back so we're running and gunning so yes yes we are we're not we're not funky six eight hours away okay so what was oh yeah so we'll let you know

Sunday what we're going to do for next Wednesday night okay all right let's pray together father we thank you for your kindness and your grace as we run through these things and and load ourselves up with just truth after truth after truth about who we are in Jesus how we grow what spiritual growth is and so we're answering that question Lord and we're coming to the conclusion that spiritual growth is becoming like Jesus if we're not becoming like your son we're not growing and something's wrong and that becomes the way we diagnose and so I pray you would give us wisdom in that father wisdom to understand how to diagnose from the scriptures encourage us Lord to encourage one another and help us to be faithful to you in great joy and with thanksgiving in Jesus name we pray amen