

## *The Present Experience of Christ's Work*

### **Week 6: A New Self**

Description: In Christ believers are a new creation. When Christ died on the cross we died with him, crucifying the old self in order to live anew to God. This new creation, this rebirth, has dramatic implications on how we live in this age and on what we hope for in the age to come.

#### Chapter 14

1. What is a covenant (46)?
2. What did Christ secure for the new covenant people by his death (47)?

#### Chapter 15

1. What is the evidence our of perfection – 1 John 3:2-3 (49)?
2. Why do we fight against our sin – 1 Corinthians 5:7 (49)?

#### Chapter 30

1. If Jesus's death means we get eternal life, why does the Bible still speak of us as needing to die with Jesus – 1 Peter 2:24; Romans 6:3-4 (78)?

#### Chapter 34

1. When we are raised with Christ, we get a new self. Describe two things that make the new self, new – Galatians 2:20 (87).
2. Can we be confident that Jesus will be with us; why or why not (87)?

FIFTY REASONS WHY  
JESUS CAME TO DIE

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TO BRING US TO FAITH AND  
KEEP US FAITHFUL



*This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.*

Mark 14:24

*I will make with them an everlasting covenant. . . .  
And I will put the fear of me in their hearts,  
that they may not turn from me.*

Jeremiah 32:40

The Bible speaks of an “old covenant” and a “new covenant.” The term *covenant* refers to a solemn, binding agreement between two parties carrying obligations for both sides and enforced by an oath. In the Bible the covenants God makes with man are initiated by himself. He sets the terms. His obligations are determined by his own purposes.

The “old covenant” refers to the arrangement God established with Israel in the law of Moses. Its weakness was that it was not accompanied by spiritual transformation. Therefore it was not obeyed and did not bring life. It was written with letters on stone, not with the Spirit on the heart. The prophets promised a “new covenant” that would be different. It would be “not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6).

The new covenant is radically more effective than the old. It is enacted on the foundation of Jesus’ suffering and death. “He

is the mediator of a new covenant” (Hebrews 9:15). Jesus said that his blood was the “blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many” (Mark 14:24). This means that the blood of Jesus purchased the power and the promises of the new covenant. It is supremely effective because Christ died to make it so.

What then are the terms of the covenant that he infallibly secured by his blood? The prophet Jeremiah describes some of them: “I will make a new covenant . . . this is the covenant that I will make . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. . . . For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The suffering and death of Christ guarantees the inner change of his people (the law written on their hearts) and the forgiveness of their sins.

To guarantee that this covenant will not fail, Christ takes the initiative to create the faith and secure the faithfulness of his people. He brings a new-covenant people into being by writing the law not just on stone, but on the heart. In contrast with the “letter” on stone, he says “the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6). “When we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5). This is the spiritual life that enables us to see and believe in the glory of Christ. This miracle creates the new-covenant people. It is sure and certain because Christ bought it with his own blood.

And the miracle is not only the creation of our faith, but the securing of our faithfulness. “I will make with them an everlasting covenant. . . . I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me” (Jeremiah 32:40). When Christ died, he secured for his people not only new hearts but new security. He will not let them turn from him. He will keep them. They will persevere. The blood of the covenant guarantees it.

TO MAKE US HOLY,  
BLAMELESS, AND PERFECT



*For by a single offering he has perfected for all time  
those who are being sanctified.*

Hebrews 10:14

*He has now reconciled [you] in his body of flesh by his death,  
in order to present you holy and blameless and  
above reproach before him.*

Colossians 1:22

*Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump,  
as you really are unleavened.  
For Christ, our Passover lamb,  
has been sacrificed.*

1 Corinthians 5:7

One of the greatest heartaches in the Christian life is the slowness of our change. We hear the summons of God to love him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength (Mark 12:30). But do we ever rise to that totality of affection and devotion? We cry out regularly with the apostle Paul, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24). We groan even as we take fresh resolves: “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Philippians 3:12).

That very statement is the key to endurance and joy. “Christ Jesus has made me his own.” All my reaching and yearning and striving is not to belong to Christ (which has already happened), but to complete what is lacking in my likeness to him.

One of the greatest sources of joy and endurance for the Christian is knowing that in the imperfection of our progress we have already been perfected—and that this is owing to the suffering and death of Christ. “For by a single offering [namely, himself!] he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). This is amazing! In the same sentence he says we are “being sanctified” and we are already “perfected.”

Being sanctified means that we are imperfect and in process. We are becoming holy—but are not yet fully holy. And it is precisely these—and only these—who are already perfected. The joyful encouragement here is that the evidence of our perfection before God is not our experienced perfection, but our experienced progress. The good news is that being on the way is proof that we have arrived.

The Bible pictures this again in the old language of dough and leaven (yeast). In the picture, leaven is evil. We are the lump of dough. It says, “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Christians are “unleavened.” There is no leaven—no evil. We are perfected. For this reason we are to “cleanse out the old leaven.” We have been made unleavened in Christ. So we should now become unleavened in practice. In other words, we should become what we are.

The basis of all this? “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” The suffering of Christ secures our perfection so firmly that it is already now a reality. Therefore, we fight against our sin not simply to *become* perfect, but because we *are*. The death of Jesus is the key to battling our imperfections on the firm foundation of our perfection.

## THAT WE MIGHT DIE TO SIN AND LIVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS



*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree,  
that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.*

1 Peter 2:24

Strange as it may sound, Christ's dying in our place and for our sins means that *we* died. You would think that having a substitute die in your place would mean that you escape death. And, of course, we do escape death—the *eternal* death of endless misery and separation from God. Jesus said, "I give them eternal life, and they will *never perish*" (John 10:28). "Everyone who lives and believes in me *shall never die*" (John 11:26). The death of Jesus *does* indeed mean that "whoever believes in him should *not perish* but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

But there is another sense in which we die precisely because Christ died in our place and for our sins. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die . . ." (1 Peter 2:24). He died that we might live; and he died that we might die. When Christ died, I, as a believer in Christ, died with him. The Bible is clear: "We have been united with him in a death like his" (Romans 6:5). "One has died for all, therefore all have died" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Faith is the evidence of being united to Christ in this profound way. Believers "have been crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20).

We look back on his death and know that, in the mind of God, we were there. Our sins were on him, and the death we deserved was happening to us in him. Baptism signifies this death with Christ. "We were buried . . . with him *by baptism* into death" (Romans 6:4). The water is like a grave. Going under is a picture of death. Coming up is a picture of new life. And it is all a picture of what God is doing "through faith." "[You have] been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him *through faith* in the powerful working of God" (Colossians 2:12).

The fact that I died with Christ is linked directly to his dying for my sin. "He himself *bore our sins . . . that we might die.*" This means that when I embrace Jesus as my Savior, I embrace my own death as a sinner. My sin brought Jesus to the grave and brought me there with him. Faith sees sin as murderous. It killed Jesus, and it killed me.

Therefore, becoming a Christian means death to sin. The old self that loved sin died with Jesus. Sin is like a prostitute that no longer looks beautiful. She is the murderer of my King and myself. Therefore, the believer is dead to sin, no longer dominated by her attractions. Sin, the prostitute who killed my friend, has no appeal. She has become an enemy.

My new life is now swayed by righteousness. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might . . . *live to righteousness*" (1 Peter 2:24). The beauty of Christ, who loved me and gave himself for me, is the desire of my soul. And his beauty is perfect righteousness. The command that I now love to obey is this (and I invite you to join me): "Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness" (Romans 6:13).

TO ENABLE US TO LIVE  
BY FAITH IN HIM



*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live,  
but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh  
I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me  
and gave himself for me.*

Galatians 2:20

There is an explicit paradox in this verse. “I have been crucified,” but “I now live.” But you might say, “That’s not paradoxical, it’s just sequential. First I died with Christ; then I was raised with him and now live.” True. But what about these even more paradoxical words: “It is no longer I who live,” yet “I now live”? Do I live or don’t I?

Paradoxes are not contradictions. They just sound that way. What Paul means is that there was an “I” who died, and there is a different “I” who lives. That’s what it means to become a Christian. An old self dies. A new self is “created” or “raised.” “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new *creation*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). “When we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ . . . and *raised* us up with him” (Ephesians 2:5-6).

The aim of the death of Christ was to take our “old self” with him into the grave and put an end to it. “We know that our *old self* was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might

be brought to nothing” (Romans 6:6). If we trust Christ, we are united to him, and God counts our old self as dying with Christ. The purpose was the raising of a new self.

So who is the new self? What’s different about these two selves? Am I still me? The verse at the beginning of this chapter describes the new self in two ways: One way is almost unimaginable; the other is plain. First, it says that the new self is Christ living in me: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” I take this to mean that the new self is defined by Christ’s presence and help at all times. He is always imparting life to me. He is always strengthening me for what he calls me to do. That’s why the Bible says, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). “I toil . . . with all his energy that he powerfully works within me” (Colossians 1:29). So when all is said and done the new self says, “I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me” (Romans 15:18).

That’s the first way Galatians 2:20 speaks of the new self: a Christ-inhabited, Christ-sustained, Christ-strengthened me. That’s what Christ died to bring about. That’s what a Christian is. The other way it speaks of the new self is this: It lives by trusting Christ moment by moment. “The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Without this second description of the new self, we might wonder what our part is in experiencing Christ’s daily help. Now we have the answer: faith. From the divine side, Christ is living in us and enabling us to live the way he teaches us to live. It’s his work. But from our side, it’s experienced by trusting him moment by moment to be with us and to help us. The proof that he will be with us and will help us do this is the fact that he suffered and died to make it happen.