

## **“The Normal Christian Life – How Then Should We Live, Final”**

### **Our Outline Today: The Normal Christian Life, From the Mountain Tops of Liberty**

- **Introduction**
- **Paul’s Two Teachings Explain the “Way”, and the “How”, of Grace Living**
- **Some Final Conclusions**

#### **I. Introduction:**

- Today is the final session (or the first of two) in our studies on the Normal Christian Life. The question before us might be, in what way is this life normal when it seems so uncommon? Perhaps for us this word’s usage has changed over the years?
  - But if we go to the dictionary, we see two central meanings: the first being “usual, regular, common”, and the second, “constituting a standard”.
  - Its origins, however, seem to go back in its Latin origins to a word carpenters used: “‘normalis’, meaning made according to a carpenter’s square, or according to the ‘norma’”. “But “normal” first meant “perpendicular” or “at right angles.”
  - In English, it came to be used in the mid-1840s as a mathematical term meaning a perpendicular line. “Right angles” were formed by that perpendicular line intersecting another. What was “right” about it, one may ask. Well, it is unusual, a special kind of thing, a thing of beauty and value”. And so the word normal was applied to many things, when they were “meeting the standard”.
  - It is that use that became common in America and the other English-speaking countries, as public schools began to proliferate, as they had already in mainland Europe, starting in Germany. But they needed teachers, and there were simply not enough. /so the women needed to be enlisted, especially for the early, elementary grades. So training schools for teachers were established to provide a standard for training. And they came to be called “normal”, after the French teacher training schools, the “Ecole normale”. In our country, some cities and towns are named due to the teachers’ colleges that were founded there, like Normal, Illinois, for example.

- I titled our studies on the Pauline teaching on the proper living out of our abundantly provided eternal life, “The Normal Christian Life,” by taking from the title of Watchman Nee’s most well-known book of the same title. There the title of the book could not have meant normal, in the sense of common or average. But educated at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, he knew the meaning of the word “normal” in its original sense, as “setting or defining the standard or the model, or ideal”. And so the book was titled.
- What is the Pauline “model or standard,” therefore, for Christian living? What do we find in the Pauline teaching concerning this critically important subject? For after salvation by grace through faith itself, our living by faith under the principles of grace is most important to our Lord God and should be, therefore, also for ourselves.

## **II. Paul’s Two Teachings Explain the “Way”, and the “How”, of Grace Living:**

- **Firstly, the “Way” is explained:**

### **KNOW:**

[READ ] Romans 6:9-10

9 **Knowing** that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

- This knowledge is so very important. For everything in our living as believers should honor what our Lord is honoring, and that is the risen and ascended Christ. For he has fully and completely paid the penalty for our sin and sins and is now seated at the right hand of God as it should be. Many today, naming the name of Christ, seem not to have this knowledge.

Of course, our faith is at the heart of this knowledge. It is not merely intellectual or mental in its essence.

### **RECKON:**

[READ ] Romans 6:11

11 Likewise **reckon [count it to be true]** ye also yourselves to be dead [having died] indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- This verb has an active action in its meaning that cannot be avoided. Take note of the “likewise” here. This is all about recognizing that Christ’s death and resurrection secured this all for us already. So, as he is now living not in relation to the sin, but only in relation to Almighty God, so also we may and should do likewise. That is the point of this gracious exhortation.

The power source, moment by moment, is not revealed here, though. We shall see in our overview today what that source is. But what is critically important is that we act as outlined here, in all simplicity, as it were. For it really is that simple.

### **PRESENT [far better than YIELD]**

[READ ] Rom. 6:12-13

12 **Let not [stop allowing]** sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

13 Neither **yield [continue to present]** ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but **yield [begin to present]** yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

- So, having reckoned accordingly, we are now seeking an opportunity to present ourselves to our loving God through our step-by-step living. For indeed, he states so affirmatively, we are alive from the dead and our members are instruments of righteousness now instead of what they were.
- **The capstone of grace truth bears repeating:**

[READ ] Rom. 6:14 **For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.**

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.
- Now, we consider the “How”. For our active and inquiring minds are always asking these very difficult why questions. Here, the “how” has to do with the explanation of what is happening within us that enables our victory over this seemingly irresistible force of sin:
  - The circumstances at hand are described, for though we have been delivered into liberty, so often the powers of sin within have had the victory:

[READ ] Galatians 5:13-15

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

- **The only solution to this reality is now described in detail:**

[READ ] Galatians 5:16-17

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

- The solution is pure simplicity itself, for it is found in our “walking in the Spirit” or, better yet, perhaps, “by the Spirit”. This is a placeholder for the Romans’ teaching, of course, the Know-Reckon-Yield (or Present) teaching outlining the entire way of deliverance, practically speaking, from the otherwise dominating power of the sin nature still dwelling within us all.

Those who deny the permanent presence of that often controlling nature are teaching a very dangerous doctrine indeed.

- The teaching is simply this: while (and only then, as) we are walking in harmony with the Spirit, the battle is the Lord’s and he is victorious in freeing us from the dominion and power of the flesh. We are set free from its controlling power and freed to carry out the desires of the new nature within us. The fruit of the Spirit is thereby brought forth, looking for opportunities to work.

This harmonious walking is what Paul writes so much about when he writes that we should be constantly setting our minds on things above, or, redeeming the time, or having the mindset of Christ, and such like. It is taking God at his word as Romans 6 details so wonderfully in those early verses. The Know-Reckon-Present follows naturally, therefore. The risen, ascended, and victorious Lord is thereby honored for his glory, amen.

- So here we see the answer to the “how” question in its glorious essence: the Holy Spirit is the answer. He dwells within every believer due to our redemption, and his many works are evident,

specifically here this great work regarding out indwelling sin nature and its many demands.

- **A critical truth is reminded:**

[READ ] Galatians 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

- Red flags are noted, though, proving failure to walk by the Spirit. In this case, other works of the Spirit are manifested, such as conviction and grieving:

Galatians 5:19-21

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

- Proofs are also given, confirming the Spirit's great work ongoing, in the realm of the Spirit's fruit, one would hope, within us. Notice the reference to law again in verse 23. And the capstone teaching concludes Paul's teaching here, verse 24:

[READ ] Galatians 5:22-24

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

- In this verse, Paul states a truth for us all, as believers. For not only some of us, perhaps the more spiritual, or as many might add, the more obedient, but all of us "are Christ's" and therefore he writes most wonderfully, "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." These are statements of fact. It does much disservice to the God of the Bible to change their meaning as so many do. They want to change this to a command, thereby both denying the full reality of Christ's work in us while also placing all believers back under a "kind of spiritual" law.

The question of when that crucifixion occurred is an important one. How would Paul answer it? Well, he has, in Romans 6, in the

verses leading up to the Know-Reckon-Yield section we now know so well:

Romans 6:3-8

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed [*or rendered powerless*], that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

- Those are the verses leading to the ones we have focused on in Romans again today. So, as written in Galatians 3:27, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ,” this is true for all believers today, for we are all members of Christ, members of his Body Church:

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

- Now, back to the Galatians chapter 5 teaching. The concluding word on this is in the next two verses, concluding the chapter with its transforming teaching. Let’s keep going on since we are living in the Spirit with every aspect of life included (different word for “walk” here emphasizing the details of living rather than the high level overview):

Galatians 5:25-26

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

- So, two complementary teachings are found here regarding deliverance from the power of sin in our lives, resulting in the full benefit and enjoyment of the Normal Christian Life:
  - The “way” shown so clearly in the Romans letter gives the method for victorious living under grace.

- The “how” found in the Galatians letter provides the explanation of the success of God’s method or way as revealed in the Romans. For only that way can be effective, as all other ways are based on law and not therefore on grace. And that is the subject of the Galatian letter. He calls that way the “walk by the Spirit” in Gal. 5:16.

Living one’s life in harmony with what the Spirit of God is doing gives the victory since it is the Spirit of God that is doing the hard part, as verse 17 explains.

- The Spirit of God is given to all of us believers as a life-long gift, never to be taken away... many ministries in our lives as believers. Some are mentioned in scripture, but probably not all. And all are to glorify the risen Christ. For that has always been the work of the Spirit of God, the third member of the triune God. Amen.

### ***III. Some Final Conclusions:***

- What Our New Life in Christ Is Not: It is not another religious system or method, another law that we can never therefore live up to. Even if they are all called “christian”. No. Those all lead to more that we must do to become more successful in controlling the sin within. They lead to arrogance and, perhaps, another, far greater fall. No, we are not supposed to just keep trying harder to become more and more like Jesus. That sounds very good, but it is very dangerous teaching indeed. And contrary to what Paul has taught here so well.
- What Our New Life in Christ Is: Taking God at his word by faith when it comes to our living. For that, we must KNOW what he has said. And then reckon upon it. Then the power of the sin within has been quenched by the Spirit, and we are free to serve God in the Spirit by using his fruit to honor him.
- We are so privileged in our Lord Jesus. All three persons of the Trinity indwell us:
  - We are the sons of God.
  - We are indwelt by our Lord Jesus, His spirit dwells within us. We are recipients of his new and resurrected life. And we are joined to him in a special way as well, having been baptized by the Holy Spirit into his Body with Him as the head.
  - We are the temples of the Holy Spirit of God.
  - We are the recipients of the glorious benefits of the fullness of God’s workings, under grace.

We have been baptized into his death, his burial, and his resurrection, with so many benefits of that already provided and so many more available.

- In the end, this is all about all that has been accomplished in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and seeing that not only our eternity but also our present living are encompassed by that. That is most wonderful. And that this is all to his glory. Amen.
- It truly is that simple. Amen.

It makes a great difference where one starts on a journey. The whole character of the journey is defined by its starting place and its endpoints.

For the Normal Christian Life, our apostle Paul says we are starting on the higher elevations and not in the deepest valleys! We are enjoying the whole mountain from that vantage point, not from the bottom, hoping we might, by some means (perhaps unknown), make it to the top and then back down again safely. We are exploring the heavenlies! Yes, our feet are planted here, but he has and does and will make the difference, for it is only by faith that we stand.

He writes like we are mountain dwellers from the beginning and accustomed to living there at that high altitude. Valley or city dwellers are not so equipped. But we are like the sherpas in Nepal who have lived their entire lives at a higher elevation. For them, climbing even higher is not such a great challenge. But for us city dwellers, it is a different story. For it makes such a difference where one starts a journey.

Our journey is to be glorious indeed, exploring all the riches he provides and scaling to heights we never could have imagined. And it is all because of Christ's completed work for us sinners.

To God be the glory, great things he has done.

Amen and amen.