

Justification and the Christian's Life

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[0 : 00] Christian life. It's our third week, our third session on these verses. First of all, we looked at verses 15 and 16, justification by faith alone.

The crux, really, of the epistle, but what everyone agrees on. Peter and Paul, the others, they're all agreed on that doctrine. But then we went on to deal with the implications of justification by faith, and that's what they're not agreed on, what they're confused on.

Last time we looked at that implication for the church. The question in verse 7, does the gospel promote sin? On the level of the church, the Galatian troublesome teachers were saying, well, yes, it does, because it promotes fellowship, eating with Jews and Gentiles.

Paul's telling you to do things that the law, that God forbids, therefore it makes you a sinner. Paul's answer, remember, was no, no, no, God forbid. The gospel of justification by faith has radical implications.

It has implications for the church. Everyone is justified by faith and by Christ alone, and all are united in Christ.

[1 : 13] Therefore, there is one church, one faith, one Lord. The days of a separate ethnic Israel of the past are gone, because Christ has come. To go back to that, or try to go back to that, that's sin.

No, says Paul, the only thing that you can do in response to the coming of Christ is see that he now has one church, Jew and Gentile, all one in Christ Jesus.

And now we go on to a second aspect of that question. Does Paul's gospel promote sin? And it relates to the implication of justification by faith for not the church this time, on the corporate level, but for the individual, for the Christian, for the Christian life.

And it's the same question that's being asked. Does the gospel not promote sin in a dangerous way? Doesn't Paul's gospel of free grace lead to antinomianism, to abandoning the law, to just living a libertine lifestyle, doing as you like, sowing to the flesh?

Paul says, surely, well, if it's grace that saves you alone and nothing of what you do, then why not go on and sin so that grace may abound? That's the same question, remember, that Paul deals with in a more fulsome way in Romans chapter 6.

[2 : 31] But the answer there, as here, is the same. No, by no means, God forbid. Certainly not. Verse 17. Because that also is to hugely misunderstand the gospel of Christ.

The gospel also, as well as having massive implications historically for the church, ending the age of Israel and the Gentiles and bringing us all together in Christ, it also has massive implications personally in the history of any individual believer.

Not only is every one of us united together in Christ, we are united to Christ. We have in the gospel a totally new existence in Christ.

We're united to him. That's Paul's message here. And that's why he says, not simply, you shouldn't go back, but you can't go back. You cannot go back because all things are new.

The old life is gone. It's dead. It's buried. Verse 20. He says, it's been crucified with Christ. To think any other way at all about justification is to totally understand the gospel completely, totally, utterly.

[3 : 47] In fact, it's to emasculate the gospel into just a shadow, a parody of what Paul's gospel truly is. The gospel, you see, Paul is saying, is bigger by far than simply being a matter of ridding us of guilt, ridding us of the past.

This is so important, so important. And Paul expands the whole concept of the gospel here as being much, much more than just that. It's not just about forgiveness of sins in the past.

Not less than that, but it's about much more. Rather, it deals, and this is even more important, it deals with the root of sin. With sin itself.

With the bondage to a life of sin that was our experience before we were believers. Sin as an enslaving power.

What Paul calls the present evil age. That's what the gospel liberates us from. That's what we might call the second dimension of the cross, saving us from sin's tyranny, from sin's power, as well as just from the guilt of sin.

[5 : 01] And also, Paul has a third dimension of the cross, where he speaks about the cross saving us not only from sin's power, but from sin's personal enemy. The author of sin, the devil himself, who lies behind all sin.

As William Still once put it very famously, we're saved from the root and the fruit and the brute of sin. From the fruit, that is, our sins and the guilt.

But from the root, the saving, the enslaving power of sin, and from the brute, the devil, the author of sin. All of that, says Paul, is what's dealt with in the gospel of Christ.

And friends, grasping that, I cannot tell you, grasping that is so important for a knowledge of the Christian life.

And yet, it's so often not clearly grasped. It's one of the things that as a young student in Aberdeen, listening to the teaching of William Still, meant absolute liberation for me, transformed my understanding, my life, getting to grips with this, the extent of the gospel of Jesus Christ and what it means for us personally.

[6 : 13] And Paul here is expanding it in terms that are crystal clear. And that's why I want to concentrate on this tonight in verses 19 and 20. He's telling us that the gospel transforms us into a new dominion, into a new realm where that power, sin, has no longer a jurisdiction, a hold, a bondage over us.

When I was on holiday the other week, I picked up an old novel by Leon Uris. Some of you will have read it called Topaz. It's a great, exciting novel about the Cuban Missile Crisis. If you haven't read it, I recommend it to you.

But in that story, there's a character, a KGB officer, who defects from Russia to the West. You can hardly remember these days now of the Cold War and that sort of thing used to happen.

But when somebody like that defects and escapes from a communist land, they find freedom in a new realm, in a new place. They no longer live in fear and oppression, but they're free to live as a new citizen in a new realm where the bondage, the dominion of that tyrannical power has gone.

And that's what Paul's speaking about here. It's the same argument that he lays out in so much more detail in Romans chapter 5 to 8 where he says that the gospel frees us from the wrath of God, frees us from sin, frees us from the law, it frees us from death itself.

[7 : 46] And here, here in Galatians chapter 2, he's primarily talking in terms of the law. You'll see in verse 17, he's also talking about sin. Are we made to be sinners?

Servants of sin, slaves of sin. So in his thinking, of course, the law and sin are bound closely together. That's what he's speaking about. In all of Paul's thinking, there only are two realms.

You're either in the realm of sin, the realm of law, the realm of death, the evil age, or you're in the realm of freedom, of life, of the spirit, the new creation, the age to come.

You can't be in both. It's one or the other. And that's the crucial implication of justification that he's expanding here. That we are united with Christ in a new world.

That justification changes everything, not just for the church, but for each Christian believer. I want to look at that tonight in detail in these two verses, 19 and 20.

[8 : 51] Here's the first thing Paul says, verse 19, We died in order that we might live. I, through the law, died to the law.

So that I might live to God, I have been crucified with Christ. We died in order that we might live. Justification is the heart of this letter.

It's the heart of the gospel. Everyone's agreed on it. But you see, Paul, Paul has no conception of justification in vacuo. Forgiveness as though it was in a vacuum.

He's not just talking about freedom from the guilt and the implication of sin, but freedom actually and in reality. Not just in a fictional sense, a metaphorical sense.

He's actually saying that we've been rescued out of an old life and set free into a new life altogether. Now, we know that in our experience.

[9 : 54] Ask many Christians, especially those who have been far, far away from Christ. And they'll tell you that their life has been transformed as they've come to know him. They've left one world and gone into another.

They'll use words like that because that is what's happened. The old life for Paul was the life in sin or under the law or in the old age.

But the new life is a life which is in Christ. It's by the Spirit. Remember chapter 1, verse 4, we've been rescued out of this present evil age.

And we've been born into the life of the age to come, the Spirit. When the KGB defector, the dissident from the communist land, defects to the West, they're not just given an assurance that they won't be killed by the Soviet guards, by the other KGB.

They're not just left where they are and given all sorts of assurances of protection. No, they're taken out of the country. They were given a new life, a new identity, living in the United States or wherever it was.

[11 : 03] And that new life, this living for God, living to God, as Paul says in verse 19, that's what being a believer, being a Christian really means.

But he says in order to live this new life, the old life has to be destroyed. There can't be dual citizenship. That's why he says we died to the law, really and definitively.

Verse 20, we were crucified with Christ. That's really what happened when we believed it was a radical break with the past. in our own particular experience.

It may not have seemed so drastic as that, but that's what happened, Paul says. We had to die to the law, to sin, to an enslaving power so that we could begin this new life in a new kingdom.

We had to. Paul says himself that it was through the law that he died to the law. It can be difficult to understand just exactly what he's meaning there, but in Romans chapter 7 he seems to be saying the same thing, expanding it when he says that the law was seized by sin, although it was good, and it became a destroying power, just as a dictator coming into power in a country can seize the law and turn it into an instrument of wickedness for his own ends, locking up the people he doesn't like.

[12 : 30] And sin seized the law for Paul, who was assiduously trying to follow it, and it beat him into despair, his inability to keep it, his inability for it to justify him, crushed him, killed him, led him ultimately to abandon it as a way of seeking salvation by works, and saw at last that in fact it was never for that, it was to lead him to a saviour, to throw himself on Christ alone to escape his condemnation.

And that kind of death, that kind of dying to our own desire for self justification is essential. And that death is the only thing that can remove us from the tyranny of sin, the tyranny of that power, can free us from being the perverse, twisted creatures that we once were.

Only that can make way for a totally new creation in Christ. That's what Paul is saying. And this transformation, this renewal comes, he says, by union with Jesus Christ in his death and his resurrection.

Paul says, we died, we were crucified with Christ. That's really what happened. Do you know the old Negro spiritual that says, were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there? Paul would answer to that question, yes, you were there, because you were crucified with Christ. His death became yours when you believed because his spirit planted that death within you.

[14 : 16] That's what happened. His Holy Spirit works a new birth within us and unites us to Jesus Christ, unites us to him in his death.

It's a definitive thing, it's a once and for all union, it's something that happens by faith. And therefore, Paul says, justification is utterly inseparable from that transformation.

That uniting to Christ to make us one with the Holy Jesus. Theological word is sanctification. And Paul's saying those two things can never be separated.

You can't have the one without the other. These things are utterly equivalent at the same time. You can't be justified, forgiven for the past, without being united with Christ by his Holy Spirit.

You just can't. His Holy Spirit unites us to him in a permanent bond, a forever bond. We are united in a, well the language Paul uses, nuptial, it's marriage language, in a one flesh relationship with the Holy, risen Jesus Christ.

[15 : 30] Isn't that astonishing? How can you or I as sinners, as rebels, be united with the holiness of Jesus Christ? That's what's happened.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6, we are united to the Lord, we are one with him in spirit. He's talking there about sexual union between men and women. And that's the imagery he uses for us with Christ.

So we can't ever separate these two things, justification and our being absolutely united forever, once and for all, in a holy union with Jesus Christ, sanctification.

But we shouldn't confuse those two things either. Theologically speaking, these theological words do have distinctions which are helpful. Listen to this from William Still.

Justification, he says, is an objective act of God in response to repentance and faith, whereas sanctification is a subjective work of God by which he plants his Holy Spirit in the soul.

[16 : 35] The one involves a declaration in heaven for all the holy angels to hear and rejoice at. The other involves an instant visitation of the soul by the spirit of the eternal life and holiness.

The one is celestially judicial, the other practically humanitarian. There are two separate aspects to this thing.

One is a declaration, the other is a subjective thing that happens within us. But both are together and inseparable. And in the Bible's terminology, they're the same act, they're instantaneous.

That's why for Paul, biblically speaking, justification always includes, or at the very least is utterly inseparable from, that union, that joining forever in a totally new creation.

Justification is no legal fiction, it's no idea of a purely forensic thing, a legal thing, an impersonal thing, where our sins are forgiven out here somewhere. No, it's a personal union, it's a marriage with Christ himself.

[17 : 48] in which our old self has been crucified, has been killed, has been done to death. What we once were is no longer, because we're transformed and there's a new I, a new me, the I that is one in spirit with Jesus Christ.

Someone's put it this way, far from being some far-fetched theory of atonement that is cold and impersonal, and emphasizes far too much God's justice and punishment, too legal and forensic.

No, rather it is wonderful, relational, familial, even nuptial. That is the image that Paul uses. In fact, Paul says it's only by virtue of our union with Christ that we can enjoy justification at all.

Only by the fact that we're united with him leads to the fact that we can be forgiven, that can be acquitted, losing the debt of our sin. Justification, you see, for Paul is part of what we receive because we are in Christ, and because that old life has been done away with, has been crucified.

It's so important to see that, friends. The gospel is not just a string of benefits that we receive impersonally. It's not just like the belongings of some dead person being given away and which we benefit from.

[19 : 21] Not like that at all. It's not like a legacy left in a human world. No, it's much more like a proposal of marriage with a living person. Think about it.

What is it that keeps a prisoner imprisoned? This is guilt. It keeps him chained. But once that guilt is dealt with, if he receives a royal pardon, then his chains disappear as well.

And he's free. The prison walls don't hold him any longer. He's free and he's got a new life. He's not just pardoned, there's an implication of his pardon. He's a new life, a new being.

He's free. Or think of debt that keeps somebody in a life of destitution, poverty. It's an enslaving power. But if debt is cancelled, well, that power can no longer hold that person.

They can break free, they can live. That's the whole rationale, isn't it, behind the debt relief campaign, making poverty history. To take away the debt and therefore free and give new life to some of these impoverished nations.

[20 : 32] And that's what Paul's saying here about the massive implication of what the gospel accomplishes for us and in us. there is a forensic, a legal aspect. Justification is a declaration.

Sin's forgiven. Right with God. But it's got an inseparable implication and that is freedom. New life. New creation. The old gone, the new has come.

And that, it's true to say the deepest thing about all of that is that everything that the gospel deals with is only possible because of that union with Christ.

The debts are not dealt with by a disinterested third party but by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. I think I've said before, I've shared with you Thomas Boston's great illustration, our situation as sinners before God, that we are like beggars, destitute in a street, a woman begging with a little child, cold and wet and miserable.

And too often our concept of the gospel is that the king himself or the prince, the Lord Jesus rides past in his carriage and sees the debtor and pulls out of his purse a gold coin and tosses it to the debtor so they can pick it up and go and pay all their debts and be free.

[21 : 52] But no, says Boston, it's far, far, far greater than that. The Lord Jesus Christ, the king's son, rides past in the carriage and stops and opens the door and comes out and comes down to the debtor woman and says, come and be my wife.

And she comes into his carriage and is taken home to his palace. And all that's his becomes hers through her union with him in a lasting marriage relationship.

And all her debts, all her past, everything else is just swallowed up in the magnificence of the inheritance that's now hers, personally, in the person of the king.

And the gospel, you see, is that by which we are married into riches, into a good name, into dignity, into status. It's all become ours by virtue of our adoption into the family of Jesus Christ.

That's the image Paul uses in Galatians chapter 4. And it's all ours by right, by virtue of our new identity in Christ, by his spirit.

[23 : 01] Just as when a soldier joins the forces. He gets the salary, he gets the uniform, he gets the privileges, he gets the dignity. All of that is his since the very first day that the recruiting sergeant says, here's your uniform.

You're now a member of Her Majesty's forces. It's a new identity and all the privileges that go with it are his. And all the benefits of Christ himself are ours from the moment the Holy Spirit brings us to new birth.

By uniting us with Christ. By clothing us with Christ. By giving us a new uniform, a new identity. All is changed. It's supremely personal, do you see?

And that's the realization that comes by faith when it comes deep and sure into our hearts for the first time. When we can say with Paul these amazing words in verse 20, for me.

He loved me and gave himself for me. Calvin says, faith is the state of being engrafted into Christ. It's more than ordinary knowledge.

[24 : 10] It is a divine knowledge in particular. It's all summed up in those two little words, for me. Before I was married, I had a general recognition of marriage as a concept.

But there came a day when I was married. And I could say, she married me. I know it's astonishing. But from a general conception of what marriage meant, to a living understanding and experience of what marriage is, was a total transformation.

And that's what Paul's speaking about. Not just love, vaguely speaking, to the Son of God who loved me and gave himself. For me. And the implication is that what has taken place is an absolute, a definitive change.

We are no longer under law. We are under grace in Christ. We are no longer under sin's sway. We are under Christ's gracious control. That's the gospel. Marriage is not just a legal transaction, accompanied by a changed state in law, although it is that.

The moment you pronounce a couple husband and wife, a legal change has taken place, a forensic change, a declaration, married. But that's not all, is it?

[25 : 34] It's a supremely personal transaction. It's a whole new life, a whole new union has taken place, a new thing has begun. And just a single life is a thing of the past.

So in our marriage to Christ, Paul says, the sinful life is similarly a thing of the past. The old has gone, the new has come. Behold, it's a new creation.

So it's not a question of you must not continue to sin. It's you cannot. And you are not under sin any longer.

Everything's become new. That's why in Romans 6, 11, Paul says, count yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ. That's why he says, sin shall not be your master.

Why is that? For you are not under law, but you're under grace. A transformation has taken place. You come out of one realm into another, from one dominion into another.

[26 : 38] So says Paul, do you see how ridiculous that question in verse 17 is? My gospel makes you sin more. No, how could it? Sin's bondage is gone.

It's a thing of the past. But there's another aspect to this. union that Paul emphasizes in the second half of verse 20. Not only are we translated into a whole new life in Christ by faith, in other words, we enter into Christ's saving and sanctifying work on our behalf by the Spirit.

Not only do we enter into Christ, but he says, Christ's saving and sanctifying work enters into us by the Holy Spirit. I no longer live, he says, but Christ lives in me.

Paul's saying instead of what he once was, controlled by the cruel tyrant of sin, that made him helpless, that made him enslaved in guilt, instead of that, Christ has totally taken over his life, taken over control.

Christ now dominates, has dominion. Christ now, the I, the old self, the me that was enslaved to sin, what I once was, it's no longer there.

[27 : 57] What I was in Adam, another way Paul puts it. Humankind's spoiled and vitiated by sin, by the fall. That's gone, that's dead, that's buried.

There's a new me, he says. There's a new I. Who is it? It's Christ himself living in me. That's what I now am.

Christ himself is in me. He has replaced the old me, the corrupted me, the old Adam, the old man. And so he says, the life I now live, I live all by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and who gave himself for me, who was faithful even to death for me.

And our life now is not a life of obedience to a law that tyrannizes and accuses us, but it's a life of obedience to a Savior who loved me and gave himself for me.

It's a life, Paul says in this passage, both by faith in Christ, verse 16, we have believed in him, and by the faith of Christ, which is how we should translate, I think, verse 20 here.

[29 : 14] By the faith of the Son of God. Because all of Christ becomes ours. All of his faithfulness, his life, his death, his obedience, everything becomes ours.

Jesus says, I come to you to give you life in all its fullness. What he means is, I come to give you myself. Having taken our place outside of our lives for our justification, Christ now takes his place within our lives for our sanctification, as one writer puts it.

We're living a borrowed life, a donated life, if you like. We've got a new identity with all the benefits that come from that identity. And that identity is the identity of Jesus Christ within us.

Our KGB agent, when he's defected, when he's been made a ward of the FBI for protection, how is he protected? Well, he's given a new identity. He might even have had plastic surgery.

He's given a new name, a new history, a new past, new bank accounts, new driving licenses, everything around him. He's put in a new place, in a new house. He's given a new world.

[30 : 30] And his life now is living out the discovery of new joys, new privileges. All of it by virtue of his new identity.

Paul says the domination of our personality by I, by my ego, by the old me, the cruel, the maiming, the tyranny is gone. There's a new domination that's totally different.

It's no intruder. It's no sinister alien power. It's no stifling, imposing force. That is sin. And the evil one lying behind sin.

No. It's a wonderful, personal presence of the sweetness of Jesus Christ, the Savior who loved me and gave himself for me.

And far from a loss of our personality, it means quite the opposite. It means a total renewal. William Stowe put it this way, Christ dwelling in my life makes me, as I have never been before, the true me.

[31 : 36] I only become truly myself when I've been born again of Christ. You see, the old ego, the old me, tainted by the fall and by sin is gone.

There's a new ego in place, replaced by the personality of Jesus Christ. And that will last forever. Change from glory into glory. At last, a life has begun as it was meant to be.

And we'll go on and we'll accomplish what it's meant to accomplish in eternity. That's the gospel. We've been set free out of bondage in sin, into a freedom and fellowship with God in Jesus Christ.

Having been set free from sin's long and weary imprisonment, we are like a prisoner liberated. But, that's just the beginning, isn't it?

When a prisoner is liberated after a long stretch in prison, they need rehabilitation, they need to learn how to live again, isn't that right? They need to be nursed back into humanity and that's what the Christian life is, being nursed back into true humanity by the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ within us.

[32 : 56] I wonder if any of you remember that film, The Shawshank Redemption. It was about a story of a man who was wrongly imprisoned and his horrific story through prison and ultimately his release.

There's a poignant part near the end of that film because one of his friends, one who had been a life prisoner, was at last freed after a long, long time. But it was tragic because what happened was he'd become so institutionalized that he was at a total loss.

He'd lost the prison routine, he'd lost the life of the cell, he'd lost his inmates, he'd lost everything. He just couldn't make it in the new world and tragically he kills himself, commits suicide.

But the other, the hero of the story, he is not only released but redeemed. The way is prepared for him by a friend who goes before him and when he comes out helps to nurse him back into the life outside.

He joins him in that new life and together they forge a future. And so Christ unites us out of the past into his life to nurse us back, beginning to nurse us back into true humanity.

[34 : 17] That's what it means to be justified in Jesus Christ. It changes the whole of the future as well as the past.

Calvin says, we are restored to true and substantial integrity. Isn't that a great phrase? It's the reversal of the effects of the fall. That's what it is.

It's the reconstitution and reconstruction of men and women as we were meant to be. And yet it's more than a reversal. How much more is the gospel?

It's much more and better than even the original creation was. Man was created in God's image. But we are made to be sons and daughters. He was created a natural man on earth and we are created as changed men and women for glory.

He was created to reflect God's glory. We are saved to share his glory. Man was made a friend of God with knowledge of God revealed to him.

[35 : 20] We are saved by Jesus Christ to be lovers of Christ. Intimately united with him forever. It's not just that he reconstitutes us for lives of obedience and holiness.

It's that he destines us for lives of eternity and glory. Isn't that marvelous? The first Adam failed. He rebelled.

He fell short of the glory of God. But the last Adam, through his obedience and death on the cross, the last Adam wins glory unimaginable for his people.

And that's what we now share. It's no longer I, but Christ. He is within me. That's my identity. It's mine. Isn't that a great gospel?

We've got to proclaim the fullness of that gospel. That we're talking about a union with Christ for eternity. That we're talking about a glory that changes from glory to glory.

[36 : 26] That there's a future unending and wonderful. We've got to proclaim that and understand that. Otherwise, otherwise people will say, with some justification, Oh, evangelicals are just obsessed with penal substitution, the wrath of God, and paying for guilt.

The gospel is never, ever less than that. It's never less than a forensic declaration of justification for our guilt. Never less. But it is much, much more.

It's not just that the past is dealt with. It's that a whole new future has been mapped out for us. But there's one last but vital aspect, and it's this.

The second half of verse 20 makes it clear. We're freed, but we're freed for the fight of faith. Paul says, we do still live out this life in the flesh, in the body.

It all sounds so definite, so dramatic, doesn't it? And indeed it is. But we inevitably ask the question, Well, what about sin? Shouldn't I be perfect then? If sin is a thing of the past, if Christ is in us by his spirit, shouldn't I be no longer troubled by sin?

[37 : 45] The answer to that question is yes and no. Sin has an accusing power. Holding our guilt over us is gone. Sin is a controlling power, a dominating influence in our life.

A way of life is a thing of the past. That has been done to death once and for all. That's unequivocal. It is absolute. But, there is a not yet.

We do still have to live out our days in the flesh. We do still have to live our existence in this age until Christ comes. Till we go to him.

Till the final consummation when his glory is complete. We still have to live in sinful bodies and with sinful minds in a sinful world. The new life is like God's seed having been planted within us and having to grow in amongst the muck and the manure.

That's where we plant seeds, isn't it? But they grow there. And there is still the smoldering remnants of sin within us.

[38 : 56] Like dregs in a cup. We've finished the drink and the cup is empty. But there are dregs. It has to be washed finally. There is a final washing that has to come before we enter glory forever.

And that's why the regeneration that God acts within us, the new birth that he brings about within us, is just the beginning not the end. And it's the beginning of a struggle against sin.

That's the true spirit life. That's the life of fullness of the spirit. Certainly it is a definite and a radical change. But it's like the change that happens to a prisoner of war when they're liberated by the allied armies.

They're freed out of the power and dominion of the enemy. But they're freed to join in the fighting, to join in the advance, awaiting that final victory.

And that's us. Or you might say that sounds a bit defeatist. That's a damp squib after all this great no longer I but Christ and all this new creation.

[40 : 05] That doesn't sound like victory and triumph. I don't want a struggle. But you see, Paul says, it's far from an equal struggle. There's a total difference, says John Murray, between surviving sin in us and reigning sin.

Between a believer in conflict with sin and an unbeliever complacent in sin. There's a world of difference between these two things. You see, we know that victory is assured. Totally.

by Christ's victory on the cross. We know that. It's just like being freed into the ranks of a victorious army, marching on the capital city of the enemy. We know that the end is in sight.

It's just a matter of time. But in the meantime, the life in Christ, the life in the Spirit is a continuous reckoning on what is ours and what we know to be true.

It's another way of saying we live walking in step with the Spirit. As Paul says in chapter 5, living to God, not to the flesh. Refusing to act as though we still lived in that old world.

[41 : 15] Putting to death continually the remainder, the remnants of sin. That's why in chapter 5 he says, since we live in the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit.

Don't gratify the desires of the flesh. Yes, you're still in the flesh, but that world is gone. You're in a battle, you're in the fight of faith. And sometimes the fighting's hard, isn't it?

It is in my life. I'm sure it is in yours. But the crucial thing, friends, when we're in a battle is never to forget that the war is won.

And all we need to do is keep in step with our captain, with our leader, with our saviour. And if we do that, all will be well. It's all about just being what we already are in Jesus Christ.

And if we're not, then we're acting falsely to all that is true of our new identity. It's like the dissident with a new life and identity in America, going around speaking Russian.

[42 : 21] You just wouldn't do it. Paul says, since you're led by the Spirit, keep in step with the Spirit. But friends, in your struggle, never forget these great empowering facts of what you are in Christ.

You are a citizen of a new kingdom. You do have a new identity. You have got a new future, a future from glory to glory.

You've got the passport. passport. It's a fact. It's no longer you, the old you. It's a new you. It's Christ within you. And the rest of your life is a life of discovery, learning the ways and the customs and the culture and the language of that new life.

And there may very well be hard times, there will be hard times, but you can never go back. everything's new. And whenever you have got battles and struggles in the Christian life, and you will, right up until the very last day of your life or the day when the Saviour comes, when you've got those struggles, when those cinders flare up, when those remnants of sin seem to be so large, never, ever forget that massive, that monolithic once and for all transformation that has happened to you when you were brought into Christ.

It is no longer the old you, but Christ. Think what spirit dwells within you.

[44 : 11] Think about the Christ who is truly yours. and you'll be able to fight. That's what justification means for the Christian life.

It's a lifetime of discovery of the glory that's ahead. It's a total transformation. It's a new creation. It's a liberation from the old to the new.

Friends, if somebody here tonight is thinking about throwing in the towel, thinking about going back, I'll use Paul's language, don't be bewitched.

Don't scorn the Son of God who loved you and gave himself for you. Think, think of that Christ.

Think of that Christ who now lives in you. and don't turn back. Don't ever turn back because the future is yours.

[45 : 18] Let's pray. there's no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.

The life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Lord, help us to understand how deep and how wonderful is your love to us.

Give us the strength we pray to walk in step with our Saviour knowing that his life is ours and knowing the future you have for us and never ever seeking to go back to all that is in the past.

Give us grace we pray for today and for tomorrow and may we walk in step with a spirit of our risen Saviour for we ask it in his name.

Amen.