



Living More Like Jesus – Part 2

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Well, social media has brought us a positive, sought-after set of vocabulary words, including words like views and likes and posts and reposts and followers and reactions and engagements and all that kind of stuff, subscriptions and subscribers. All kinds of things that equal a lot of good vibes in people's hearts when they get them. And, you know, I know social media didn't create people's craving for people's applause, but it certainly has created a new stage for people to pursue it. And now that's nothing new. It certainly preceded computers and computers or no computers, people have been looking for other people's approval for all time immemorial. I mean, this has been what people want. They want people's approval and it starts really early. Kids, they want their parents' approval and then they want their love-interest's approval. And then they want, you know, a teacher's approval or a coach's approval or, you know, whatever, a boss' approval. They want their kids' approval, their spouse's approval, their grandkids' approval. Until they get tired and worn out and they get sick of people and then they just want their own approval, I guess. And they become an old curmudgeon, and they just want their own self-congratulatory applause. Whatever, you know how it is. People like to live for someone, and a lot of people end up just living for themselves.

But I guess the most important question for you this morning, and maybe the most important question that could ever be asked, is who are you living for? And whose applause do you really want? And of course, there's only one right answer to that question. 2,000 years ago there was an event that was God's billboard pointing you to the right answer to that question. Sin, actually in the Bible is defined as you seeking the approval of anyone other than your creator, the one you were created to seek the approval of. And it is more important than you may think to pursue his approval. And it is something that is more satisfying than you might ever imagine. And we need to get back to as Christians, if you happen to be one, calibrating our hearts and our minds every week to thinking about that because it's so easy for us to drift. And so we want to look at two verses in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 today that'll help us not only understand the who, but the how and the why, that we need to live for the audience of one, that we need to think about living for the approval of the God who made us. And I want to show you these two verses, and I often quote the second verse of this passage, Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 15, that we are supposed to recognize that we are supposed to no longer live for ourselves, but for the one who died for us and rose again.

Now you hear me quote that often just offhanded because we aren't supposed to live for ourselves. We're supposed to live for Christ, the one who died for us and rose again. But there's something that's supposed to drive that. And the Apostle Paul admits that he and his team who were out there traveling around and planting churches, that's what is driving him. There's something driving him, his love for Christ. And so this is seemingly a simple concept, but one that is so rich and so deep that we're going to spend our whole time talking about it. And if you look at your worksheet, either the digital version that you downloaded or maybe the printed copy, I know it looks like a simple outline because there are only two points. Don't applaud for that, but only two points. It's really a trick because there are six sub-points. So it's a six-point sermon. But as you can see, there are only two verses, and I didn't even map them



out because all these points are kind of interspersed and they're laced and they're very rich and they're very deep. So prepare for that. And I've asked God for a really hot weekend out here in the parking lot, (audience laughing) so you can feel the pressure of the richness of this text.

So take a look at this text. Let me read it for you. I've already quoted most of it, but let's start with the very important word here. The third word in this English text that Paul said is driving all of this in his life. And certainly it's what he wants to drive the Corinthians as they seek to live for Christ. Verse 14 Second Corinthians Chapter 5. I'll read it from the English Standard Version. Just two verses this morning. "For the love of Christ," he says, "controls us, because we've concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died." Now that's an interesting way to put it and that may make you scratch your head at first, but keep reading. "And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sakes died and was raised." Now, at first blush when you read that just right through the first time, that says a bit of a tongue twister and a bit confusing, but hopefully before we're done, it'll be real clear. Clearly talking about the fact that there's the love of Christ that's connected to something that is driving Paul to say we all ought to live for him. But interlaced in all this is the death of Christ, and it is something really deep and rich about us apparently dying with him, and something about him dying for us, and something about us living for him and we're going to try to sort all of this out.

But it really starts with the fact that it is something basic to what you first learned when you went to church, and that is that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son," but the sending of his only Son and the giving of his only Son is really euphemistic about the fact that he sent his Son to die in his mid-30s on as, of course you know, a cross. And this was something that of course you also know he came here innocently, living not as a sinner, but as a sinless one. And he died 2,000 years ago by the delivering over of the Jewish leaders to the Roman officials who gave the thumbs up to have him crucified on this Roman form of execution. And we all know at least the basics of the Christian theology that his death there was some means of some form of God forgiving our sins through that process. And here it says that death was done for us, and that kind of love expression should be the foundation for us no longer living for ourselves.

So let's at least put the first heading of the first three points here that we have on our worksheet. Let's put it this way. We need to think about and consider, number one, the saving love of Christ. That's all set in his death, but let's just put it down that way. Point one on your outline, we "Need To Consider the Saving Love of Christ." For the love of Christ, Paul says, controls him, him and Titus and the whole team. It controls him, right? It is constraining him to be able to say if Jesus died for us then we should live for him. But let's just start with that. He died. That's the central feature that we think about which is the mechanism of him saving us, that Christ came and died. And Letter 'A,' let's just think about that and I'll put this in terms of seeing it or thinking about or contemplating or considering it. Letter 'A,' "Let's See the Death He Died." That's the first thing you contemplated, I'm assuming, you thought about as you went to Sunday school as a kid, or at least you got exposed to Christianity, probably before



you ever read the text for yourself, you learn that Jesus died for you. You heard that concept, and it started with the fact that he came and died.

So let's just revisit that narrative, and let's just start with the first gospel and go to Matthew Chapter 27 and kind of revisit the text. We need to think about the fact that Jesus died. Who is Jesus of course? Well, we are confronted with the God who is and the God who is is presented as a singular God who's presented in three persons. This complexity of a God who is eternal who exists as three persons, and as hard as that is to contemplate we understand there's a Father and a Son and a Holy Spirit, and the Father sends the Son who takes on all the attributes of humanity and lives among us. And as we said last week, he has, you know, hangnails and a headache and pangs of pain in his stomach when he's hungry and he has to sleep at night because he gets tired and in traveling he gets thirsty. And we learn he has all the problems of humanity, including being subject to death itself. And yet he's not a sinner. He's tempted in every way as we are, but he doesn't give in to that temptation, and he doesn't sin. But this human/God, this "fullness of deity" dwelling in bodily form ends up dying. That's the culmination of his earthly ministry. And then, surprise, he comes to life on the third day. This is the central message of the second person of the divine Triune God. And we're learning about in all four gospels that this is a pretty horrific death that he goes through.

And in Matthew Chapter 27, we meet a character named Barabbas and Sunday school grads tell me who Barabbas is. Who's Barabbas? He's a notorious criminal, right? And why does he enter the narrative of the scene in the crucifixion of Christ? Because Pilate, remember, he has to be signing off on the execution of Jesus because the Jews are not allowed to just go off by themselves and execute someone who lives in Israel, because Rome is in charge of the district. And the governor in this sense has to sign off and that's Pilate, Pontius Pilate. And the Sanhedrin, though they are the ruling class of the Jews, they have to go to Pilate and they have to ask permission to execute Jesus. And they're envious of Jesus because everyone's listening to him preach all the time. And large crowds are following him all around in Galilee, in Judea, and even in Perea and out in the Transjordan. And the Jews hate Jesus and everyone's following Jesus, and they think he's great. And so the leaders of the Jews want to kill him, and they're doing everything they can. They even get Judas, an insider, to betray him. And so they bring him to Pilate. And Pilate thinks, I don't see any problem with this guy.

As a matter of fact, he's intrigued by him. His wife thinks that he's innocent, and she tells Pilate, don't have anything to do with this guy. And Pilate's getting the drift this guy is innocent, so he thinks I know what I'll do. I'll get the worst prisoner I can possibly get. And he finds this guy named Barabbas in prison. He's incarcerated. He brings him forward and he says I know what I'll do. I can get out of this jam just by getting Barabbas up here and saying, let's just release Barabbas or Jesus. I'll give them that choice. And there's no way if they get this guy they're envious of, the good teacher going around doing good, healing people, and Charles Manson, if they have that choice, there's no possible way they're going to let Jesus be crucified. No way. They're not going to let Charles Manson go. That's how Barabbas enters the scene, right?



Let's pick up the narrative here in Matthew Chapter 27. Matthew Chapter 27, if you want to look at the Barabbas interest, he's called a notorious prisoner in verse 16. Drop down to verse 24. Pilate's getting nowhere with this. Did you already write down Letter 'A'? Okay, great. Verse 24, "When Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning." Have you ever seen a riot? You've seen videos of riots, right? You don't want that. But this riot was beginning. "He took water," in front of everyone, "and washed his hands," this symbolic act of I don't want anything to do with this. And he said, "I'm innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourself." Now, this is an act of cowardice, of course, because he's thinking, I don't want to be guilty of this, I don't want anything to do with this. And yet he's going to turn Jesus over to be crucified. "And all the people answered," in a bit of an ironic sense. I mean, you think about the double entendre on this, they say "his blood be upon us and our children," which is an interesting way to put it the way the blood is splattered upon the altar in the Old Testament of the lamb that is sacrificed for the sins of the people, and the Passover and all the other ceremonies of a sacrifice. And they said that meaning we'll take responsibility for this, right? That's what they said. The crowd was whipped into a frenzy because of the Sanhedrin and all the Jewish leaders, and they cried out, "His blood be upon us." And, Pilate then says great. Okay, I guess. They called his bluff and they said, take Barabbas then. "He released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, they delivered him to be crucified."

Now, if you have a reference Bible or a study Bible, everything in the column, the publishers and the people who publish the Bibles, they put that in. But every time you have something in the text itself that's put in by the translators. Now, rarely do you have a comment put in by the translators. You just have something that relates to the manuscript evidence, and usually it's something technical. Do you see next to the word "scourged" you have a number three there if you have an English Standard Version. They actually have something that's not normally put in there. And that is something that relates to the linguistic translation of that word "scourged." It's such a unique word that they have to put almost a commentary to this word, which is a kind of a linguistic commentary, because they want you to know this isn't just a word "scourge." This has a historic, unique linguistic sense that you should know about. Do you see a number three in your English Standard Version next to that? Now, this is more than you normally get because this isn't from your published reference Bible or, you know, the publisher's trying to add any commentary. This is the translators trying to get you to see something. "A Roman judicial penalty, consisting of a severe beating with a multi-lashed whip containing embedded pieces of bone and metal." That's probably one of the longest things you're going to get embedded within the text where the translators themselves, the translator committee of the English Standard Version, are going to put that in just to let you know that that word "scourge" is pretty unique.

Now, how many times have you read that? As a matter of fact, back in the old days, when you've heard this preached on, the preachers would talk about the Cat of Nine Tails. Do you remember that? This is not the leather whip you bought in Tijuana when you picked up your poncho when you were in junior high. The leather whip, you know, that just has a little leather tip on it that makes a snapping noise. This is something that has got multiple prongs... You went to go see the Passion of the Christ that Mel Gibson put together. Right? This had multiple prongs on it. It has all those pieces and shards of metal and bone. It was intended to



rip the skin open. Right? That was the picture there. And "then it says the soldiers of the governor," verse 27, "took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, they gathered the whole battalion before him, and they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him," over his shoulders. "They twisted together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand." A reed, that's a stick. Right? "And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" Right? A stick, that's supposed to be a scepter, like you're a king, right? The robe was to make fun of him. The crown was a crown of thorns. Like, oh, you claim you're a king. And they mocked him. "They spit on him and they took that reed and they struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and they put his own clothes on him and led him away."

Now I often talk about the Renaissance pictures and paintings of him being crucified. You've never really seen it because they always drape his private parts. But that's not what happened. They stripped him naked. By the time they put him on the cross, he was stripped completely naked. Now, I know you've heard this hundreds of times. If you've been in church all your life, you've read this in your Daily Bible Reading. If you've been at our church, you've been reading faithfully through the Bible every year. I mean, you've read this four times a year because you read all four Gospels and you sit there drinking your latte or your morning coffee, and you have your leather Bible draped across your lap and your little Afghan covering your cold toes in the morning. You've read this many, many times, and you yawned your way through it because you know the story. It's very common to you. It hardly makes you gasp anymore. But I want you to see the death that he died. Because the death that he died, like it says in Isaiah Chapter 53, "by his stripes you were healed." We're not talking about physical femurs. We're talking about your relationship with God was damaged. He came to fix that problem. And his suffering was the thing that was healing you. It was fixing your relationship with God, right? "The wages of sin is death." There is a penalty for your sin that was being paid for. And all I'm saying is you're so conditioned with the story, it hardly has the effect anymore.

But if I were to take you say to a Holocaust museum and you've never been, and you start looking at pictures, black and white pictures, of what goes on when people have human suffering and you see the photos of real naked people in black and white who are being tortured by soldiers in their dressed uniforms, maybe taking their batons and hitting people and mocking them and stripping them as they often did completely naked, and they would often stand them in the freezing cold out at attention until they started to collapse, and you'd see the soldiers often spitting at them in their face. And I think maybe some of you would have a tear that would start to fall down your cheek, which I doubt happened last time you read Matthew Chapter 27. You'd start to recognize the torture that went on as they mocked them. You know, they would often even to find out as they sent them to the concentration camp, they would measure their noses to see just if they qualified and how Jewish they were. And sending them to the different concentration camps, they would sometimes put them in small isolation boxes that were too small for them to sit down, and they certainly couldn't lie down in. They would seal it up, and sometimes where they couldn't even... it was completely dark, sometimes they would suffocate in their own carbon dioxide because they couldn't breathe. Which, by the way, is exactly how Jesus died on the cross. You die from suffocation



because you can't breathe, because you're stretched out and your diaphragm can no longer work because you suffocate on the cross. That's how Jesus died. He died on the cross.

And when you see that, or you read that and you hear how people died of starvation, and oftentimes as they died in the cold and they lost the digits on their toes or their hands in the freezing concentration camps. And all these soldiers in their overcoats, dressed in their warm boots and their warm gloves, came up and mocked them or spit in their faces like they spit in Jesus' face. And you start to feel the visceral response of how humiliating that is, as they're mocked simply for being a Jew in a concentration camp, I think maybe you feel a little something different at that particular point and you think, oh, they're innocent. Yeah, yeah. They didn't do anything criminal to get there. But, you know, they're not half as innocent as the Christ who sat there in the courtyard of the governor, the headquarters of the governor. No, not that half as innocent as he was. And the innocent one, the Lamb of God, who is spotless in terms of his moral record he came to this earth to die at the hands of the creatures whom he made with the bare fisted knuckles that he designed as the creator of all things.

He was willing to be hit and to be beaten and to be mocked. To have, as it says, this crown of thorns on his head, to be hit with a stick. And you've seen the thorns haven't you in the Middle East that they made this crown of thorns out of that are three and a half to four inches thick that are like nails? Have you felt the skin on your forehead lately, maybe the last time you had a headache, how thin that is how quickly you start to bleed? Isaiah Chapter 52, before we get to the meat of Isaiah Chapter 53, talks about how the marring of the appearance of the Son of Man who's going to be crucified and killed and crushed as a sacrifice is going to be marred where you can't even recognize. He's marred; his appearance is marred more than any man. He's unrecognizable. But the Father was pleased to crush him, putting him to death. That's what the Bible says that the Son of Man is going to go through for us. That he's going to be humiliated and they're going to mock him, verse 29, they're going to strip him naked. And then it goes on in Isaiah Chapter 53 saying, "as one from whom men hide their faces." They hung him up completely nude on a cross. And as women walked by the pathway and they saw these three men, it says in the next passage they took him out.

Drop down to verse 37. They put this charge over his head, and they said, oh, he's the king of the Jews. And "two robbers were crucified." Of course, they're stripped naked as well, one on each side. So there are three grown hairy naked men hanging on these three crosses, and "one on the right and one on the left." Two men who gave their lives to crime and immorality. And in the middle of them all was the man that the gospel writer said went around doing good. "And those who passed by derided them, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it,'" which of course he never said, "'in three days,'" right? That's what you said. "'Save yourself! If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross,' so also the chief priest," dressed in all the regalia with all their fancy clothes on, "with the scribes," the seminary professors, "and the elders," who led all the services in the synagogue, "mocked him, saying, 'He saved others.'" He went around healing people. Oh yeah, sure he did. "'He can't even save himself. He's the King of Israel.'" Oh, if he's such a king, "'let him come down now from the cross and we'll believe him. He trusts in God,'" verse 43, "'let God come and deliver him now,'" if God's going to save him, oh, sure, "'if he desires him.'" After all,



he says, "'I am the Son of God.' And the robbers," on both sides, naked and bleeding themselves, "who were crucified with him also reviled him the same way." And the people who were walking by, just like Isaiah Chapter 53, you can imagine the mom with a teenage son or a teenage daughter as they were just trying to get to the marketplace in South Jerusalem, turning their heads away from Jesus. They didn't want to show their teenage kids that. This is how the Son of Man, the Son of God was being crucified, he died.

Paul says, "the love of Christ controls us, because we've concluded this: that one has died for all... he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves." Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life." Do you know the rest of that verse? John Chapter 15:13, "for his friends." He just wasn't anyone. You know that. "The shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." The shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. The Bible says in First Peter Chapter 2 verse 25, that we "were straying like sheep," right? But here's the shepherd laying down his life for the sheep. We're straying and he's killed so that we could return to the great Shepherd. This is amazing. Mocked. Savagely beaten. Prisoners on either side of him as though he were some common crook. You need to see the death that he died.

A passage says, the love of Christ should control us like it does Paul. "Because we've concluded this: that one has died for all." This is not a statement about the extent of the atonement, by the way. Paul uses the word "all" here after he said, "controls us because we," controls us and we. That's a first-person pronoun, obviously, "us" and "we" because he's talking about himself and those who are on his team. Now, I just want you to think about this for a second. Now he's saying "all" to stretch the word "all" to his audience, his redeemed audience. And he's trying to say this. All of you, too, obviously. Right? He's died for you. And he's going to include that to the people who have died with him. We'll see that down in the bottom of verse 15. But my point is this: "all" is a word trying to get the Corinthians to know it's not just for Paul and his team, it's for you guys as well. And so I'm trying to say this. You need to see that Christ has died, not just for the author of this letter. He's died for all the recipients of the letter. And now, 2,000 years later, to the recipients of this sermon, if, of course, you're the one who recognizes that he did die for you.

So let's put it this way, Letter 'B.' I was going to put "see the people that he died for," but I hope you're one of the people who he died for, so let's just put it this way. See the person that he died for, if in fact, you're included as one of the people that he died for. Letter 'B,' is "See the Person That He Died For." And by that I mean, if he died for all, are you included in the all? And that means you. And it should mean that you're part of the "us" and the "we." Did he die for you? If he did, then you have to see yourself in Romans Chapter 5 verses 6 through 11. And please turn there. You have to turn to Romans because the only way we're going to make sense of our passage here is to see how Paul unpacked this in Romans, Romans Chapter 5. Here's the problem. I was asked on the radio this week, what is the biggest barrier to becoming a Christian? And it was an easy answer. Easy. So easy. Why do people not become Christians? Here's the easy answer because people don't think they need to. That's the easy answer. Jesus is the Savior of sinners. "I came to seek and save the lost." To quote John Chapter 9, the reason people don't think they need Christ is because they don't think



they're blind. As long as you think you're seeing, then "your guilt remains." That's the problem. The reason my neighbors don't want to go to church this morning, don't want to sing worship songs, don't want to study the Bible is because they don't think they need a savior. That's the problem.

Look at verse 6 of Romans Chapter 5. If you don't see yourself in this verse then this is the point. Then Christ's death is not for you. Look at verse 6. "While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." If you can't call yourself weak and therefore you can't save yourself, right? And you don't see yourself as ungodly, then you don't go home justified just to echo the parable of Christ. It's the one who beats his chest and says, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" See, the only way you qualify to be a recipient of the grace and mercy of God is to see yourself as a sinner. "While we were still weak at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person -- though perhaps for a good person one might even dare to die." Good, obviously, in the vocabulary of the New Testament is even one step higher than the word "righteous," which can be more relative than the word "good" in a vocabulary if we were to spend time on a vocabulary. "But God shows his love for us," in this, let's just forget the word righteous and good, "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." If you don't see yourself as a sinner, ungodly and weak, then none of this matters and no one's going to care. Who cares about a savior if you don't think you're a sinner, ungodly and weak? But if you do, the only time Jesus in the gospels uses the word "justified" is when someone calls himself a sinner.

And so for us, here we are. "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved from the wrath of God." Of course, you don't get the wrath of God if you can say I'm a sinner and I need Christ. "For if while we were," here's another word, "enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." Now he's the intermediary. He's the high priest. We ride in on the coattails, on the robe of the great High Priest. "More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom now we have received," here's a great word, "reconciliation." We are now in with God because we're in with Christ. We're in Christ. We get connected now with Christ. How? Because we know we're sinners. We know we're enemies. We know we're weak. We know we're ungodly. Look at the words. Verse 6, "weak" and "ungodly." Verse 8, "sinners." Verse 10, "enemies." Are you willing to say this morning and I'm talking to you non-Christians right now? Are you willing to say this morning I'm weak? I can't save myself. I'm ungodly, I don't measure up. I'm a sinner, I do bad things and I'm an enemy of God. This is where people stumble right here. And the only way you're going to say that is by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is going to convict you of sin, righteousness and judgment. Sin, I'm a sinner. Righteousness, I don't measure up, I fall short. And judgment, I deserve judgment. That's when you can say I'm an enemy of God. I'm a sinner. I'm ungodly, and I'm weak. I can't save myself. Once you're there, you're ready. Then here's the thing. Christ died for those people. When you're weak, Christ dies for the ungodly. While we're still sinners, Christ died for us. While we're enemies, he reconciles us by his death. This is good news. This is the best news. See the person he died for. He dies for that person. And I hope you're there. This is it. Consider the saving love of Christ. He dies for ungodly, weak, sinners and enemies. And then he reconciles you.



The last phrase in Second Corinthians 5 verse 15 is he "for their sake died." What does that mean? Died for their sake. Died for their sake. Died for their sake. I didn't need anybody to die for me. Why don't you just love me. That was good enough. Love. Love me. Right? I just want you to love the ungodly. I want you to love the weak. I want you to love the sinner. I want you to love the enemy. Why do you have to die for me? I mean, that was really like I got emotional and powerful for Pastor Mike talking about his death. But why did he have to die for me? Turn to Romans Chapter 6. Let's go to the next chapter. Romans Chapter 6, let's start in verse 3. He's addressing a practical problem in verses 1 and 2. And he says, "Do you not know that all of us who have been..." Now, you've learned enough in this church, I hope, to know that "Baptizó" means "to be placed into." "Don't you know that," if you've been placed into Christ Jesus, you were placed, "into his death?" Okay. If I've been reconciled to God because I've been reconciled in Christ, no one's going to come to the Father except through Christ. If I've been placed into the Father because I've been placed in Christ, I've been reconciled to God, then I have been placed into his death. Right? I have this thing into which I'm now for his sake he's died for me. I have some connection to his death. Keep reading. "We've been buried therefore with him by," being placed into his death. You mean I was in the tomb with Christ? I get placed into his death? Well, in some way I did, "in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory," by the power, by the greatness, by the gravitas, "of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Now I get some kind of new life because of that resurrection.

Verse 5, "For if we have been united with him in a death like his." What do you mean? I don't remember being even alive in the first century. No, but I was united with him in God's mind in a death like his, which isn't just like he got his head chopped off. He went through all the suffering. I got dead with him, I was dead, I died with him. "In order that the body of sin," my body of sin, "might be brought to nothing, so that we could no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died." I don't remember dying. No, but I did. I died with Christ. I've "been set free from sin". How did I get set free from sin? This is a judicial act of God. God has counted me dead to sin. And I should count myself dead to sin. What do you mean? Verse 8, "Now if we have died with Christ," I apparently died with Christ 2,000 years ago. In God's mind, apparently that happened. "We believe that we will also live with him." Now "we know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him."

Jot this down. Letter 'C' is "See the Death You Died With Him." If you trust in Christ because you know you're weak, you're a sinner, you're an enemy of God, right? You know that you fall short. You trust in Christ. Then here's what God sees. You are now in Christ's death. There's a place where God's judicial payment has been paid. God says, Mike, you have died with Christ. The Father's payment was paid because, you know, here's the thing about Jesus, he didn't do anything wrong. Why should he be spat upon? Why should he have a Roman soldier hit him in the face? Why should he be nailed to a tree? Why should he be hoisted up and be made fun of? Why should he be shamed on a cross? Why should all that bad stuff happen to him? He's not a sinner. Why should he be treated as a sinful person? No. I should be treated with all that, right? Why should this happen? Why should he be condemned like that? No, he



shouldn't be because he's innocent. Right? I should be treated like that. Well, I died with Christ. Look at the words again in the passage. I've been, verse 3, baptized into his death, verse 4, buried with him, verse 5, united with him in a death like his. Verse 6, my old "self was crucified with him." Verse 7, one who has died with him. Verse 8, "if we have died with Christ." Do you see all those words? My life has been placed into his death so that my penalty has been paid.

That is the amazing legal truth of my life. I am no longer being subject to condemnation. Now I can go into Chapter 8. Are you ready? Romans Chapter 8 verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus." How come? Because I've already paid the penalty. I wasn't there, but I paid the penalty. Why? Because I was there being punished because in Christ I was punished. I was buried with Christ. I was crucified with Christ. I was dead with Christ. Christ died. I died. The penalty was paid. The condemnation has been paid. I'm not going to be condemned because I'm in Christ. "The law of the Spirit of Life." See, the law of the Spirit of Life that raised him from the dead, that's my life now. I get to live before God in the newness of life because Christ was raised from the dead, and my body of sin is going to be done away with and I get a resurrection body like him because he's qualified to have that body. "The law of the Spirit of Life," that law, now applies to me, "has set me free in Christ Jesus," I can't leave that phrase out, "from the law of sin and death." Guess what? I'm a sinner, I deserve punishment. I got free from that. Why? Because of the law of the Spirit of Life. Who does that apply to? Christ. But I get that applied to me now because the perfect Christ has fulfilled all of that, which is exactly where he goes in verse 3. "God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh." Well, I couldn't do it. "Could not do." How did he do it? "By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." Does that mean he's not human? No, he was human, but he looked like a sinner. He wasn't a sinner, though, right? "And for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh," right? He took Christ and treated him like a sinner. And then we now, in newness of life, we walk as best we can waging war against the passions of the flesh. We walk now "according to the Spirit," right? That newness of life. We're doing the best we can here in our sanctification. This is good news. No condemnation for me. Why? Because the spent justice of God took place on a cross, and God has seen me as already paid for when Jesus said, paid in full. Paid in full, he didn't sin? No, but I did, and I died with Christ. This is the gospel.

Consider the saving love of Christ. It is being threatened in every generation. This theology of Christ dying for us is trying to be redefined in every generation. And don't let anybody tell you different. This is the theology all the way back to Leviticus, which is being attacked in every generation. It's the theology I just read to you in Romans Chapter 5, Romans Chapter 6, Romans Chapter 8, this is the theology... If you don't think it's in Romans 5, go back to Second Corinthians 5. As long as you're calling it into question, I know you are. verse 21. If you don't think this is in Paul's mind in verse 21, I've already read you the passage we're studying, but drop down to verse 21. He crescendos into all of what I just read in Romans. Look at verse 21, "for our sake," right? We know who he's talking about in verse 14. He's trying to get everybody in verse 15 to be like him in verse 14. "For our sake he," who's the he? What's the antecedent to he? Right? The last pronoun in verse 20, that's God. "He," God, "made him," beginning of verse 20, that's Christ, made Christ, "to be sin," we just explain that



in Chapter 8 of Romans, "who knew no sin," that was clearly spelled out, "so that in him," in Christ, "we might become the righteousness of God." How clear is that? "For our sake God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." That's the gospel in one verse. That's it. I need to see his death, I need to see that he died for me, I need to see my death in him and the only way that applies to me is if I can see that I am weak, I'm a sinner, I'm unreconciled, I'm an alien to God, I'm an enemy of God. I need this. I throw myself on the mercy of God as a penitent sinner and I trust in that. And the only righteousness I have to quote the Apostle Paul's testimony is not a righteousness of my own, not a righteousness that comes from any law keeping, a righteousness that's alien to me, a righteousness that comes by faith in Christ. That's what Paul said, Philippians Chapter 4. It's the testimony of every real Christian. This is the testimony of real Christianity. We're trusting in Christ's finished work.

Consider the saving love of Christ. Well, what do we do with that? Well we respond. Go back to our passage. We respond. It's clear you've memorized it by now. He died for all, verse 15, "that those who live might no longer live for themselves." We no longer live for ourselves. Number two, "Respond With a Life of Sacrificial Love." Sacrificial love. It's sacrifice because I want to live for myself. I'd like to live for myself. I'd like to live for people that I want to live for, and I usually pick people that it's good for me. I want to live for them. And then if I become a curmudgeon, I live for just me. So I want to respond with a life of sacrificial love. But that's hard. It's sacrificial. So I respond with loving Christ. That's hard to do. First thing, Letter 'A,' I have to die to myself because that's a hard thing to do because that's my natural tendency. Passions of my flesh always want to live for the flesh. I always want to live for myself. But all my self-interest has got to get in the back seat and that's tough. That's tough to do. That's tough to do.

Sometimes God has worked into his created order certain things that make that clear and show how he shows that it is possible. One thing he does in the natural order of things is he shows us a natural example of that. One thing he does is in motherhood. Does he not? Does he show us how a mom instantly looking at a blob, oftentimes not as cute as mothers think, a little tiny baby that pops into the world and instantly mom falls in love with a little baby who has nothing really to offer mom? Nothing. Nothing but weird poopy little diapers, a little wrinkled face. Can't do anything, can't cook, can't clean, can't do anything. And no matter what that baby squeaks and wants at two in the morning, her love for that baby with nothing in return is willing to eclipse her self-interest in the middle of the night, right? Am I right about this? Right? And I heard some feministic psychologist tell me, a PhD, that's all the paternal, the massive, you know, our male chauvinist, we've built this into you somehow. We tricked you. We somehow, the male patriarchy, we taught, we hypnotize you in the middle of your childhood to teach you to love children that way. Whatever. I'm sorry. Edit that out, but... We men are more tricky than we thought. This is a natural love of God, right? This is something that God gives moms.

And I'll tell you what, it's a good example, by the way, of what Jesus taught us. And that is that we are supposed to love Christ more than we love anything. Jesus was asked, what's the greatest commandment? To love God with all your heart, soul, strength of mind. Do you



remember that passage? That's what we're supposed to do. And you think, well, Jesus sometimes even compared it, like in Luke 14, he said, you know, it's got to outpace every other love. And some people throw a flag on the play, and I'm not supposed to love my wife anymore? Well yeah, you're supposed to love your wife, but you're supposed to love God more. That's a hard thing for people to understand. But I'll tell you this every husband understands that if they have a wife who has a baby. Because here's what we understand. You can still say a wife still loves her husband when she has a baby, right? Certainly we understand that. But things change. Husbands, would you agree with that? Yes? You're afraid to say it, but it's true, right? You know you're not number one anymore, right? There's something that changes. Your wife can still have love for her husband and still have a biblical love for her husband. But still, that kid gets in the middle of things and you understand there's a difference there. And the same thing is true in the Bible. Every love in your life is reoriented when you become a Christian, it's just the way that it is because you're supposed to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind."

And if you need some help with this, go to Deuteronomy Chapter 6 and study the passage. Everything about our love for God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. We're supposed to love him first in everything we do, which I think the Orthodox Jews got wrong. They think it's about phylacteries and a box of Scripture on our heads and our hands. It's not. It means our thinking, our eyes, our hands, everything we do is supposed to be directed by our love for God. We love what he tells us to do. We love what his interests are, his priorities. Everything is to be directed by that, and it means that that's going to trump and eclipse what I want. And everything's going to be directed because I love God so much. All of my interests, they take a second backseat to his interests. And there's something that's gratifying about that if I really love God that much. So we have to die to ourselves. Is that hard? Yeah, it can be hard. But we do it. And it says we're not supposed to just die. We're supposed to die to ourselves and live for him, right? We take up our cross. We all die. But then we live. We live for him. As it says in Romans 6:4, we live in a newness of life. Letter 'B.' "Live As One Made New," right? We die to self, Letter 'A,' Letter 'B' live as one made new. Live as one made new.

I have to go to the dentist tomorrow. Do you feel bad for me? Well, you should. Have you been to the dentist lately? Do you like going to the dentist? How about when you hear this? (the sound of drills) Do you like that sound? I don't like that sound. It's a lot louder than that when it's in your mouth. And then the shots and all that stuff. Then why do we do it? We do it even though we resist it and we don't like it. Because it's a necessity. I guess it's not a necessity-necessity. You can do without it. But you don't want to do without it. You can resist it, but it's a necessity if you don't want to have your teeth fall out. If you don't want to look like you would look like. (audience laughing) In the passage it talks about us taking up our cross. It says, "what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" And what would it profit you to skip the dentist and lose all your teeth? I guess that's where that illustration was going. The point is, to live is one made new is to live with the priorities that he has for us, and that sometimes is uncomfortable to put his agenda first. But that's where it takes us. If I had more time I'd unpack this further, but Letter 'C' "Live For Christ Purposes." Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. And make sure you're on track to put his



interests before your own, and that can be a great thing if you love God the way that you should. Love comes first, and from that should flow his purposes. And don't say I can cast his purposes behind my back if I don't feel love. Love is not a feeling. Love is an agenda. It's an agenda of putting his interests before my own because it didn't feel good for Christ to die on a cross, but he put his interests before your own interests. And that's exactly how Philippians 2 starts. It talks about the cross, but it starts with putting interests before our own interests. And Christ put our interests before his own interests. And of course, that's a decision we make. It's not a decision we make after we feel a feeling.

Go to Colossians real quick, Colossians Chapter 3. I just want to tie together in the newness of life we should have that's motivated by a new perspective because we love a person. If you love Christ because he loved you, which is how it really starts, right? "We love," it says in First John, "because he first loved us." That should be the starting point. First John 4:19 I think it is. "We love because he first loved us," and because he loved us so much, and "Greater love has no one than this, than someone lay down his life for his friends." And he loved us then we should seek him, we should want to please him. Colossians 3:1 says, "If then you've been raised with Christ," we have a new life, we're reconciled in him because we died with him, our sins have been forgiven. Well, then it says in verse 1, we should "seek the things that are above, where Christ is," right? If Christ has a kingdom and that kingdom is coming, we should care about the kingdom priorities. He's "seated at the right hand of God," and one day that kingdom authority is going to come and rest on earth. So set your minds on that. "Set your minds on," the new administration, "the things that are above." It's not this administration but it's coming, "not on things that are on earth." This earth is messed up. We're going to rearrange a few things down here, sure, we'll do the best we can. But it's not about this earth. "For you have died," right? You've died. "Your life is hidden with Christ in God." That's the real thing. Now "when Christ," I love this phrase, "who is your life," when he "appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Then it deals with some practical issues in verses 5 all the way through verse 17. Then he gets to real daily life. Hey, "wives, submit to your husbands," that's fitting. "Husbands, love your wives and don't be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents." That's right. It pleases the Lord. "Fathers, don't provoke your children lest they become discouraged." Hey, "Bondservants," employees, "obey in everything." Please your master. Don't be just doing the right thing when they're watching you. Be sincere, "fear the Lord." Verse 23, I don't care what your job is, "whatever you do, work heartily," literally work with all your soul, "as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance," when the kingdom comes. "You're serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong." If they wrong you, don't worry. God is going to deal with that. "Masters," verse 1 of Colossians Chapter 4, if you're an employer "treat your bondservants justly and fairly." You're going to get evaluated by "a Master in heaven" one day. That's just a great list of where real life meets your schedule. If Christ is your intention, if Christ is your love, you need to seek Christ's purposes in your everyday life, right? Your audience is one. Your concern is Christ. What am I going to do this week to seek the applause, the "like button" being clicked by Christ, right? Not by everybody else. It doesn't matter what people think of you, right?



Ultimately, it matters what Christ thinks of your week. It really is about that. Let's seek his approval.

Let's pray. God help us please not to be so bound up with this world. I know we have to care about our families, our lives, and even things on this earth that are going to affect our lives for the next 10 years, 20 years maybe, maybe longer. But the things that really matter are transcendent. There are people's souls that we are dealing with and people we see every day. It's our understanding of your Word and you, and it's getting as many people locked on to the gospel as we can. It's getting our hearts ready to meet you. It's understanding you better as you said in Jeremiah, it's boasting that we know and understand you instead of our riches or our accomplishments. God, we're thankful that for most of us here, I hope most of us here, we can claim that we have had our sins paid for on a cross 2,000 years ago, a deep and rich payment that was made. God, we just want to love you back. We loved because you first loved us, and we want to love in a way that makes it clear that we're willing to put our interests behind in the back seat. Whatever our job is, whatever our calling is, whatever our calendar looks like this week, we want to see how we can please you in the doings of our lives. Whatever appointments we have, whatever we have to get through, just let us do it in a way that makes you happy, that makes you pleased that something that would make you say, well done. God, thanks so much for the gospel, for the truth of the gospel. Thanks for this reminder. Let us always be mindful that you're our master and our King.

In Jesus' name. Amen.