

## ***A NEW CREATION in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)***

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**Abstract:** 2 Corinthians 5:17 says if we are “in Christ”, we are a new creation. What does that *mean*? Do you *feel* new? Can you stumble spiritually with old sins and old habits from time to time and still be “a new creation”? Experience new hope and joy as you discover the depths of “being new” in Christ.

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Don’t you just love new things? I think most of us do. Kids love new toys, and so do we with our grown-up “toys”, or really anything new.

**Warm hello to everyone, this is Philip Shields with a new topic about being new in Christ** – and what that means. Its exciting, thrilling and life-changing – if we understand it properly. ***Please be turning to 2 Corinthians 5:16-18.*** *(This transcript will be close to the audio message, but it won’t be identical. At least the scriptures and main points will be here so you can follow along. The audio will be more interesting though)*

God sure isn’t against new either. Do you know *God* wants All Things to be new? He even says “Behold I make ALL THINGS new” (Revelation 21:5). **God likes new.** He speaks of the new covenant. New heart, new way, new garments, new wine, new man, new names, new heavens, new earth, new Jerusalem, the new and living way, new song – there’s a lot in the Bible about all the neat new things God is creating.

**2 Corinthians 5:16-18** “Therefore, from now on, we regard no one *according to the flesh*. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.** 18 **Now all things are of God**, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation...”

Remember Paul is saying this to the Corinthian church, which he had earlier declared “still carnal” (1 Cor. 3:3). That church was full of problems, and yet he still says God has made them a new creation. So how about you and me?

***Paul says God made you a new creation. And that excites God. He loves seeing you be His new creation. This new creation starts with answering God’s call to repentance, and then having a new walk, a new relationship with our Savior.***

But *many* of God’s people, many professing Christians, misunderstand this vital topic. ***And MANY of us, myself included, get discouraged when we feel like we’re not LIVING a new life all the time, or that we must be FAILING GOD somehow, letting Him down, as we seem to fall short, to sin, so often. And we ask ourselves, “How can I be NEW, but too often give in to the same old things?”*** And by the way, if you think you’re perfect and never do the same old things – never fall or sin and fall short of your high calling – then **1 John 1:8-10** says you’re just not facing facts! We ALL sin, even as we try to walk the new walk. We ALL fall short.

So how is it that we're new – and still be stumbling, failing, sinning from time to time. And how can we ever feel encouraged, if we fail so often? Those are valid questions – and ones I hope to answer today.

**IF WE'RE A NEW CREATION, WHY DO WE DO OLD THINGS?**

***That's the point of today's message: understanding how and why we are new in Christ, and yet still stumble in carnal actions from time to time. How do you understand the apparent contradiction? I hope you feel encouraged today.***

**Let's get back to 2 Corinthians 5:17 and take a closer look at it.** There are some exciting truths in the Greek used there:

***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”***

**“THEREFORE”** – follows what was said in verse 16 – that we should not regard one another according to the carnal, fleshly nature.

**“IF ANYONE** – everything that follows is based on this “IF”. That means each and every believer in Christ. That includes you if you are in Christ.

**“is IN CHRIST”** –. *What does being “IN CHRIST” mean?*

*Paul explains it in Romans 8.*

**Rom 8:1** *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are **in Christ Jesus**, [then He defines what it means to be “in Christ”]-- who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit”* **Then in verse 9:** *“But you are not in the flesh but **in the Spirit**, IF indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”*

**Phil 1:1** says the same – “To all **the saints in Christ Jesus** who are in Philippi...”

So if you have God's spirit, if you're a saint, if you're a disciple, you are “IN Christ”. In fact, **we** are considered part of *His* body (**1 Cor. 12:27**), we are IN Him. It's very, very intimate language. And when we are “in” Christ, we are one, one with Him, one with each other.

There is one God, one Lord, one body. That one body is the body of Christ, which is what we call the church. When we are in Christ, we are part of Him, we are in Him. But we can only be in Christ if His spirit dwells in us and if we walk by that spirit.

***But understand this: when we are in Christ, when our Father looks at us, who does He see?***

***Ultimately that one body we are a part of, is the body of Christ, not my vile, corrupt, failing body which Paul calls “the old man”, or the old self.*** Now we have a NEW beginning in Christ. We'll really dive into this today. **Gal. 3:27** – “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ”. Remember that verse as we go through this.

***So God our Father sees us as one in Christ.*** The Almighty now sees us as being a part of his own son. This is crucial to understand and I'll continue to expound on it.

**“NEW”** – Greek is **KAINÉ**. It is used 45 times in the New Testament, and refers to new things, like new wine, new bottles, new cloth, new name, new man, new creation, and so forth. It means, according to the Theological Dictionary of NT Words, something “new in nature”, as distinct from the Greek word “neos”, new in time. It has the meaning of being **unique, as opposed to something that is simply renewed or improved over time.**

**VINE’S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS** has this to say about **KAINOS**: NT:2537 denotes “new,” of that which is unaccustomed or unused, not “new” in time [neos], recent, but “new” as to form or quality, **of different nature from what is contrasted as old.**”

**Continuing in 2 Cor 5:17: “CREATION” - - Here’s what Vine’s says about this word:**

**1. Ktisis NT:2937**, primarily “the act of creating,” or “the creative act in process,”

In **2 Cor 5:17** the reference is to what the believer is in Christ; in consequence of [because of] the creative act he has become a new creature.”

So the word here, in this context, has the distinct meaning of something created by *Divine* hands. There is ONE creator...that is God. We are not creating *our own* new self. Go at it, if you want to, but don’t get me involved in that – because I’m not the Creator! Neither are you! There is ONE God, one creator...and He is creating the new you. You can’t create yourself. You can’t beget yourself. .

We don’t become “a new creation” because of something WE do. Nothing creates itself! We do have to accept the call to be His disciple, to follow Christ, to repent of our old ways and now to walk with Him.

**Eph 2:8-10** “For by GRACE you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 *not of works, lest anyone should boast* 10 For we are HIS workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

***“Therefore, if anyone is IN Christ, he (or she) IS a new creation”***

**Continuing on with 2 Corinthians 5:17 – “OLD THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY”**

***“Passed away”*** – Greek is “*parelthen*” – has a meaning that is came to a **SUDDEN END, abruptly.** We need to be, in our hearts, done with old way. The old ways, the old things shouldn’t just gradually fade away. The Greek means from our *new* heart, *new* mind’s point of view—the old way is **gone!** That’s even though we still occasionally stumble – as we’ll see. Stumblings – not a regular way of life, not a walk in the wrong direction anymore. Again, remember, Paul says elsewhere as we shall see, that we still have an old nature – but that is not the nature that should be controlling us now. But we still have a fleshly nature. Even Jesus said, “The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”.

***Peter says that we no longer run the way of life as we used to and old friends considers it strange as they watch us. (1 Peter 4:1-4). We need to be decisive about letting the old ways go.***

**“BEHOLD ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME NEW” (end of 2 Cor 5:17).**

*“have become” – Greek: “gegonen”.* This verb is in the perfect tense...it doesn’t ever stop. You started to be new, and the tense here means it doesn’t ever stop. You’re new, continue to be new as long as we walk in the spirit! Don’t minimize what this can mean.

*If we really understood it, we’d be praising God forevermore!*

**CAN YOU LOSE THIS NEW CREATION STATUS? OR IS IT “Once saved, always saved” – REGARDLESS of what you do?**

Here’s where I differ with many other believers and Christians who believe this newness, this salvation we have, can never be lost, never be forfeited – the “once saved, always saved” idea. It sounds good, but its simply NOT Biblical, when you get ALL the verses together on it.

*You can’t read the book of Hebrews, especially **Heb 3:7 through 4:3**, where Paul WARNS* the early believers that they can end up like ancient Israel with their carcasses littering the desert, because God wouldn’t let them go into the promised land. He also warns about taking the sacrifice of Christ lightly and the judgment on us if we do (**Heb. 6:4-6; 12:25-29**). The Bible is simply full of warnings so we don’t fall *short* of the grace of God. The *entire book of JUDE* is a warning not to get careless with our salvation. Paul warns the Corinthians that believers who continue to practice evil lifestyles will not be in the kingdom of God (**1 Cor. 6:6-9**). He lists many sinful ways of life – idolaters, practicing adulterers, fornicators, covetous, drunkards, practicing homosexuals, thieves - etc. etc. – will NOT be in the Kingdom if they don’t stop that lifestyle. “Such *were* some of you”, he says. So they were being urged to stop those sinful ways.

So *whatever* you hear from me coming up – realize that I believe we cannot assume we’ve already attained to the kingdom. PAUL says he sure didn’t assume that – until the very end of his life when he said “there’s laid up for me a crown of righteousness...”

**So back to being new: here’s where the PROBLEM lies with many people.**

*“If I’M IN CHRIST, if I’m new, if the old has passed away—and you say abruptly is what the Greek means, and my newness is forever – **WHY does this NEW ME still sin**, still get so easily tempted, still stumble, still do bad things, still fail, still lose my patience or my temper, still show unkindness at times.... I HATE myself at times, people say – so HOW CAN I BE NEW?”*

The answer is found in understanding the presence of God’s *new nature* and the continued existence, at the same time, of the old nature. Paul explains that later. For now be turning to **1 Peter 1:22-23**.

***HOW do we get a NEW nature? Only if we are being created new – with a new nature!*** God is not into mixing new and old. He’s starting a brand new life, with a brand new nature. He’s not trying to overhaul your old self. Remember Days of Unleavened Bread? You can’t delevan bread that has already been leavened. You have to discard it and bake *new*, fresh unleavened bread. We were what the leavened bread pictured. It has to be discarded – and let *God* make you a new lump of *unleavened* dough. (**1 Cor. 5:6-8**)

**1 Peter 1:22-23 NKJV**

”Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the

brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, **23 *having been born [Greek: gennao] again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible***, through the word of God which lives and abides forever..”

**The word in the Greek, for the English word “born” is “GENNAO” – which can also mean “begotten, born”. *STRONG’S, about GENNAO, New Testament word # 1080 in Strong’s: gennao*** (ghen-nah'-o); from a variation of NT:1085; to procreate (properly, of the father, but by extension of the mother); figuratively, to regenerate: KJV - bear, beget, be born, bring forth, conceive, be delivered of, gender, make, spring.” That word encompassess the entire cycle of new life – from begettal and conception, to birth itself.

**1 Peter 1:23 ASV** “having been *begotten* again, ***not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible***, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth.”

Just as surely as you became a new creation the moment your father’s seed and your mother’s seed united to form an embryo – and that embryo was new, had never been before – but that embryo grew into a fetus, which grew into a baby – and one day was born as a new human being– so it is *now*. ***You didn’t create yourself the first time – and you will not create yourself this second time either!***

**John 3:3-8** “Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, ***I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.***”

4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?”

5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, ***unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*** 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, ***and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*** 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. ***So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.***”

So we’re first begotten by the *incorruptible* seed of the Holy Spirit, and Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:50-53 that there is coming a time when this seed that Peter calls “*incorruptible seed*” develops to the point of being fully born. Paul says *at the resurrection* is when this “incorruptible shall put on incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:50), when at that time we will be born of spirit, and be –according to what Jesus said in John 3:8, just like the wind. Invisible, spirit. Incorruptible. Exactly like God, of the same kind of being God is, unable to be practicing sin as a way of life (1 John 3:9). God is a Father. His offspring will be like Him, just like the offspring of anything else is like the father.

**So we have the NEW SEED. What does the new seed give us?**

-- obviously a new life begins, but even more. I’m going to read a passage right now that I’m going to ask you to read, re-read, and ponder over its significance. It only can be appreciated with much thought.

**2 Peter 1:2-4** “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His ***divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness***, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, ***that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature***, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Now notice what Strong's says about the Greek word "**NATURE**" – in context of the divine nature we've been given:

**Strong's New Testament word 5449.**

**phusis** (foo'-sis); from NT:5453; **growth** (by germination or expansion), i.e. (by implication) natural production (lineal descent); by *extension, a genus [KIND]* or sort; figuratively, native disposition, constitution or usage:

KJV - ([man-]) **kind, nature** ([-al]).

*It's the SAME WORD used over and over in the New Testament to represent what something IS BY NATURE.* The word "nature" or "natural" is PHUSIS. Write these passages down and study them later, and where the word "nature" is – it's the same word used for what God has given us – **HIS** divine nature, His divine kind. Write these verses down: Romans 1:26; Romans 2:4; Romans 11:24; Ephesians 2:3 and James 3:7

*The new nature YOU now have growing in you – is GOD'S own nature. That has major ramifications on how God sees YOU now that His seed, His nature is growing in you. . It should also affect the way you see yourself now – the new You, that is. Is the "new you" a bad person? Can the "new you" be good?*

Are we getting it? God has given us His Seed, to beget in us, a new nature – or it can even be translated a "NEW KIND" of being. **The Divine kind.** Are you ready for this: and it is not blasphemy, but should be very inspiring: **The God kind.** The divine nature or divine kind, as it can be translated. It makes us of the same kind, of the same father, same mother, Jerusalem above, (**Gal. 4:26**).

*The words "of the divine nature" in verse 4 are crucial. It fits beautifully in with the series I gave on The Mystery of Christ and Church, where I showed that **Christ will marry us, but can't marry someone who is of a different kind of being than He is.** It's almost like our concept of "genus" or even species. We have to be of the same KIND as God. He is going to marry a bride who is of the House of GOD, but that bride has to be just like Christ.*

And now Jesus will be able to marry us, for we'll all be of the same kind at the resurrection of the just. We shall be like Him, we're told in **1 John 3:1-2**. This hopefully is very inspiring to us.

So right now we are beginning to look more and more like God, but if we press this notion of spiritual perfection today, *too* hard, or too much, it can only lead to discouragement among the people of God, for we will not ever be perfect in this life, brethren. If we think we must be **now**, and *can be now, when in fact we can't now, and won't ever in this life be spiritually perfect – we'll only be down all the time. GOD does not want His children to feel depressed all the time.* Ministers love preaching the standard of Christ, perfection – and that's understandable – but we have to understand what "perfect" means in the Greek, and we'll get to that in a minute.

I see too many of God's people in 1 of 2 camps – and both are negative:

1 . **Asleep** and not caring what their spiritual state is. Very dangerous indeed.

2. Awake, but **Discouraged** and disheartened, because they want to obey God perfectly, but realize they still fall way too short of the glory of God.

Both camps will be dangerous. There's a 3<sup>rd</sup> camp which we'll address today –

**3. BE AWAKE – and be fighting against sin, and *having confidence in the final outcome as we put on Christ*; feeding God's nature in us and asking for more, and realizing spiritual maturity is a process.**

*We are not to be allowing ourselves to remain discouraged when we stumble*, for 1 John 1 says we will, and we do, but we must get back up and let our spiritual defense attorney, Jesus Christ fight our case with us, for us and get us declared pardoned. And then move on again. . . and walk with Him more and more, day by day, obeying Him better as we do this walk, but realizing we will not do it ever perfectly in this life. *Our stumblings and setbacks spiritually now are not our way of life anymore*. They're not our walk, but stumblings along the Christian walk.

*Now many of you hearing this will profess you KNOW this – but if you and I are often discouraged by our human nature, it is because we don't really realize it yet.*

*I'm going to say again: perfection happens at the resurrection, and not before, but if we insist on hanging a guilt trip, a failure sentence on everyone, we are playing into Satan's camp! At the resurrection is* when it says, at that time, "this corruption puts on incorruption" (1 **Corinthians 15:50-54**). It is when Jesus changes us to spirit that we are presented at that time without spot or wrinkle, without stain, without sin (**Jude 24**). Do you know ANYONE, who at their death, could be said to have been spiritually perfect? None but Christ, folks!

*Now look again at the seed of God – and what that gives us.*

**We now know instinctively how powerful our heredity--our genetics -- is.** We now know it could be even more important than training and environment. Look at your kids. The happy kid was born happy. The serious kid, the analyze –everything kid was that way as a small child. You didn't put that in him or her. She always was that way. Now you add to what genetics gave her, training – and what a powerhouse we can have if we work with the genetics they have, and not try to change what they are to their core, but work to bring out the gems in that core of what genetics gave them

Where am I going with this? We all know we inherited strengths, talents, good things from our parents. We all also know we inherited some of our dad's and mom's weaknesses. In my case, I can see in my children some of my strengths and some of my weaknesses. And I have my dad's hard work ethic, his artistic talent, and my mom's musical talent. I play guitar without ever having had a single lesson. And only 3 individual years of piano lessons – so the talent was there, and it needed training, and had I had more training, I'd be better. Those with a lot of talent, often play beautifully without a single lesson.

*I also have inherited some of my parents' weaknesses of their nature.* No need to divulge those things now. And my Dad was largely absent in my life. My Mom was a good mom, but – just as I was not the perfect Dad I should have been, -- I did the best I could at the time, my kids are still short changed. *I* am shortchanged from my heredity. So are you. So what is the answer?

*The problem is that we've been called to be a kind of people we've never been before. That's why we have to be "converted".* We have to change. But our natural heredity falls short of what we need to be the leaders, kings, priests and holy people God wants leading His kingdom. Paul

himself says “not many mighty, noble, etc. are called now” (1 Cor. 1:26-28). So here’s what happens.

We get a new seed, from a new father, our real father now. We’ve just read that. What does that new seed give you? We’ve read that too – a new creation, a new kind of being, His divine nature: His talents (some of them), HIS gifts (if He so wills), HIS power, His love, His spirit – and as we grow, the fruit of His spirit.

**Over the years, there has raged a debate: which is more significant -- environment or heredity.”** *The answer to this plays a huge part in understanding the Bible’s message of being new.*

And years ago, most of us would have said your training is more important than who your parents and grandparents were. However, with more and more evidence coming out, the debate is shifting heavily in favor of *genetics* in the last decade.

\* **animal trainers** have known for long time -- can train a hunting dog or a race horse all you want, but it sure helps to have good stock to start from. We KNOW this about animals. We’re being called to be priests, kings, teachers, leaders in the world tomorrow. If we have not come from the best stock possible, what are we to do? and what does this have to do with “being new”? Be patient. It will all come together shortly.

\* **Newsweek** ran an article some years back about twins separated at birth and reunited 20-40 years later. It was uncanny how *similar* they were, how **talents** were so similar, how **preferences** were similar -- and yet these separated twins had been raised totally differently, in different settings and environments.

**Well, that's pretty sad news for many of us who may not have come from top stock - - from parents and grandparents who were gentle, wise, sensible, self-controlled, loving, tall and good looking, strong stock, with longevity, healthy, with full heads of hair and strong teeth -- and so forth. Some of you hearing this don't even know who your father is!**

**And we certainly had no part in choosing our parents!** A barber told me once that the one definite thing we could have done to be sure we’re not prematurely bald like I am – was to have picked A DAD AND MOM who had a full head of hair all their lives. (Ha!)

**And we are what we are, largely because of the combination of what we inherited and what we got, or lacked, in training. It's both.** Conclusion: most of us are not of the mighty, and nobility, or upper class of this world. We’re not the great of this world. And God called those of us who are not of the great to make His point: with His genetics in us, with His grace, with His power, with His nature, even these clowns – you and me – can become the firstfruit of the kingdom of God.

*One wag once said that if you and I were included in a book about you and me, it would not be titled “Who’s WHO”, but “What’s THAT?” (Ha)*

We’ve been called to be something we’ve never been before – kings, priests, holy people, but we weren’t born with that kind of nature or “stock”. NOW we can be, for we have a different “kind” or nature than before starting to grow in us. We’ve been called to become *like God* in fact, in our thinking, in our conduct, in our VALUES, in our behavior – in everything, in fact. We are to become mature as our heavenly father.



**Some err however – I'll say this right now – some err in concluding that we change ourselves.** I submit to you, that you *cannot* change yourself by YOURSELF any more than you or I can make ourselves be taller, or be something we're not by ourselves. Nor can you start your own new life. ***You can't beget yourself.*** You can't bring yourself into being. You need a father and mother and a seed planted in the womb. Ponder what that means spiritually. You are NOT your own creator spiritually. We just can't be!

***So what happens to us that is so monumental – and we need to look freshly at this monumental topic, with new eyes, new ideas, new encouragement:***

When Jesus was resurrected, He told Mary Magdalene to tell the disciples that He was going ***“to My Father and YOUR father” (John 20:18).*** When God gave the seed of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost -- and to you when you had hands laid on you after your baptism – HE becomes your FATHER in every way as He was Jesus' father. Let that sink in. In every way, as God was Jesus' father, He becomes my father, and your father too. Jesus says so!

So I am now ***part of the genetic code of the heavenly creator, God Himself.*** And so are you if you have His seed, His spirit, in you, which is his gift.

And that makes Jesus our older brother and makes us all of the same household of God. No wonder He is called the “firstborn of *many* brethren” in Rom. 8.

***And this is also where we get screwed up and discouraged!*** We think that since we have that new seed, we should right now be just like God in every way and we get so discouraged when we're not, that we can feel like “what's the use?”—and start to give up, which falls right into Satan's hands!

YES we should be becoming more and more like God, as that spirit grows in us, is exercised in us, but that is not something that can or will happen quickly any more than a fetus, or even a new born baby, is just like their mom at Dad at that point. We have to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord, we have to become more like God now that we have His seed in us.

(By the way, a real good message set to go along with this one is the 2-part series on Repentance and then the follow up message which most have found very encouraging – “Now that you've repented, what does God think of you?”).

**Back to the genetic code, the new divine nature we have received from the seed of God:**  
--have you noticed how ***children*** look like their parents, even sound like their parents, even WALK like their parents, and more and more so as they get older and more mature.

-- that can be happening, must be happening to us also! And it probably *is* happening more than we recognize, to those of us who seriously take this new way of life. But *we're like the 2-1/2 month old fetus that looks more tadpole than human, but is a new creation nonetheless. Or like even an 8 year old boy* who wants to have a beard like his father. He's not going to yet. But as he grows, he does become more and more like his father. We're like that, and we have to be *patient* and let God's seed have its perfect work that will develop into maturity and good fruit in its season, in its time.

Perfection, full maturity, fully being fully like Christ, happens at the resurrection, when it says, at that time, “this corruption puts on incorruption” (**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**). It is when Jesus changes us to spirit that we are presented at that time without spot or wrinkle, without STAIN, without fault (Jude 24). But John warns us – in 1 John 1:8-10 – that if we say NOW that we have no sin, and don’t sin – we deceive ourselves! Even Paul, a deeply converted apostle, says even he still slips up and does the things he hates (Romans 7:14-17).

### **PAUL’S EXPLANATION OF HOW NEW CREATIONS CAN DO OLD THINGS**

\ **In fact, be turning to Romans 7:14.** THIS passage, more than others, EXPLAINS why we get so down on ourselves and we wonder why and how we can “be new” and yet do the old things more than we want to – though they are no longer our WAY of life.

**When Christ comes into our lives, and we become His, it can be a monumental change, as dramatic as when Christ knocked Paul off his horse and told him to turn around and quit persecuting him.** Paul immediately changed course. It was a life changing event for him and needs to be for us too.

**But that same Paul admits that even then, he still too often caved in to the “old man” – the old self, the old nature. But Paul says something that, if we will accept it, will change your life forever! Many of you will think I’ve gone off the deep end at first – but what I’m about to read is said twice in 4 verses to make the point!**

Let’s just read it for what it says, and I want you pray about this passage on your knees, and do go on and read Romans 8 also – which continues the fight we must be putting on:

#### **Rom 7:14-8:3**

14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but ***I*** [deeply converted Apostle Paul saying this, remember] ***am carnal***, sold under sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but ***what I hate, that I do***.

**Paul had said something similar also to the Galatians:**

#### **Galatians 5:16-17**

16 I say then: ***Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do NOT do the things YOU WISH***”.

#### **Back to Romans 7:16 now**

16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.

17 ***But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*** [read that again] 18 For I know that in me (that is, *in my flesh*) *nothing good* dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 ***Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*** [he repeats this concept]

*[Brethren, if anyone does something wrong, and then says “It wasn’t I doing it – but the old self”, we’d think that person was not accepting responsibility for his own actions. But now that we have two natures – the old carnal nature and now God’s new nature growing in us – Paul says that since he no longer walks in the old way, but does stumble from time to time, it is the OLD self doing the bad things. Think about that!]*

Romans 7:21 “I find then a law, that **evil is present with me, the ONE who wills to do good.** 22 For **I** [the NEW “I”, the converted “I”, the Divine nature we now have “I”] **delight** in the law of God according to the inward man.”

He clearly says his *new self* is NOT against God’s law.

[**Jump ahead to Romans 8:6-11** – which discusses both unconverted and converted Christians – but different things are said about each:

**Rom 8:6-8** “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the **carnal** mind is enmity against God; for it is **not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.** 8 So then, *those* who are in the flesh **cannot** please God.”

[Too many quote that and stop there when talking to God’s people. But let’s keep reading!]

**Rom. 8:9-11** But ***YOU are not in the flesh [so we can please, obey and love God]*** but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10 And if Christ is in you, ***the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life*** because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.’

**Are we getting the picture? You are “not in the flesh”! Paul says so, in Romans 8:7.** Sure we are flesh and blood. But ***that carnal self is not what God sees when He sees HIS very own nature growing in us. GOD’S nature cannot be against God! Nor is God’s nature IN us, “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9) as the carnal nature and heart are.*** If you can’t accept you are not in the flesh in God’s eyes, then read, re-read Romans 8:7 til you get it. The rest of this message will make no sense unless you accept what Paul was trying to teach the Romans and all of us.

So back to what Paul says in Romans 7:21 – “*evil is present with me, the one who wants to do good*”. He is not saying *he* is evil now. No, the new Paul is not “in the flesh”. And in fact Paul says when he now sins, it isn’t the *new* Paul that is sinning, but the old sinful nature that still dwells in us, and will still dwell with us, until we are changed to incorruptible.

Once we understand that, we should be able to *accept* we’re in a fight that will be waged until Christ returns, and accept that. Don’t be discouraged because we have to fight so hard and don’t even get discouraged when we often lose. Just keep going back to your commander in Chief. Just be learning to grow in your reverential fear and respect for our Master and His law and His way.

***But the Commander does not want His troops – you and me – to have low morale.***

**Back to Romans 7:23, continuing:** “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

**Romans 8:1** “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*”

God does NOT want us – who are supposed to be feeling NEW and experiencing His new divine kind in us, His new nature in us, feeling condemned! **Romans 8:1.**

The problem is, there is still too much **perfectionism** and **legalism, on our own merit**, in some of us that will prevent us from experiencing the joy of being new now, even as we still stumble, as you will see. And neither have we learned to forgive ourselves, let alone one another, though we want GOD to forgive us. Please hear my message on forgiving one another in the same manner as God forgives us, if you haven’t heard it yet.

*SINCE we’ve been called to be changed, then what’s the answer? And why is it so hard to change, and even hard to accept that we are new when we seem to be doing so often the old things:*

*I think the answer is because it’s a lifelong developmental process of becoming more mature spiritually.*

### **PERFECTION – AN ATTAINABLE GOAL IN THIS LIFE?**

*One concept that has been less than perfectly translated is “BE ye therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48, KJV). Perfect?*

*Websters says it means “conforming absolutely to the ideal type and being beyond any practical or theoretical way to improve”. Wow. Who’s that, except Christ!? Remember, “there is none good, no not one” – so how are we supposed to be perfect?*

*Matthew 5:48 “perfect” = “teleios” meaning complete, or full grown, mature. But not “perfect” the way we think of the word.*

*I think its one of the reasons for the discouragement. Many ministers preach a standard of perfection nobody ever has, or ever will attain, except Christ! And I’ll add, except in Christ. When a person never can, never will attain a goal she’s trying to attain, no wonder we can become discouraged.*

*The word is used 19x in the New Testament in the KJV. But they’re the same root word – meaning “mature, full grown”. Paul also uses it in Colossians 1:28 – presenting everyone perfect in Christ. Read it on your own.*

*Paul also states in Ephesians 4:13, that one of the aims of the ministry to help us all grow: “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”.*

*Most other translations have the word “perfect” as “mature” or “fully grown”. It’s the same Greek words “teleios” - - mature, complete. But Paul is obviously saying it’s a long growth process. “UNTIL” we become a fully mature person, to the measure of what Jesus is. Changing must be taking place.*

*Did Paul ever get there on his own? In one of the last books he wrote, here’s what PAUL said about himself, and I’ll read it this time from the RSV:*

**Phil 3:8-12 RSV, especially verse 12**

8 Indeed I **count everything as loss** because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found IN HIM, **not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in (of) Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on [or is BY] faith;** 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. **12 NOT that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own.**”

*PAUL had not yet attained full maturity or perfection – but was fighting against the old carnal nature and seeking more of God’s mind to grow in him. We’re running out of time – but we can’t do it ourselves, by ourselves. So how does it start, how does it happen?*

*First we must repent. I have several messages on repentance.* I’ve had to grow in my own understanding of this as I saw a lack of deep enough repentance in my own life. But now it’s different. Passover pictures this repentance. We acknowledge the need for a new way – we throw out the old leaven which pictures our old ways, and bake fresh unleavened bread, picturing Jesus, the new bread we take in. **HE** comes to reside in us by the spirit (**John 14:15-18**). We know **HE** abides in us because of the Holy Spirit (**please read 1 John 3:24**), and therefore we have incredible power, for “He who abides in you is greater than he who abides in the world” (**1 John 4:4**). ***God literally now occupies my life, changing me and giving me new life I’ve never had before.***

*And when we know we have repented:* Don’t waste one more second of your life, and of your emotions, mulling over **anything** in your past if you’ve repented of it already. If you’ve repented, taken the Passover, it’s gone. We spend so much wasted time *rehearsing* the “could have’s, should have’s, and would have’s” of our lives! what a waste of the spirit! What a destructive waste of the heart we need to have! Even the end of Revelation 21, around verse 4 says “the former things have passed away”. Certainly my OLD sins could be called “former things”. They’ve past away, God says. They’re buried. So are yours. Don’t grave-dig your past. Don’t even let others grave-dig your past. God will judge spiritual grave diggers. There are too many of sick kind of mind.

*You and I can’t have a different past, and what’s happened to me, what’s happened to you, and what you and I have done – for good or bad in our lives -- is what has brought each of us to where we are *today* and we wouldn’t be where we are today, or what we are today, without all those*

experiences! In many cases, those who have been forgiven much, as I surely have, end up loving God more in the end. Jesus said that. (**Luke 7:47**).

***When we believe in Christ – and accept what He has done for us, what happens? Some of you will love this, some of you who want to create your own new creation will think I'm nuts, but let's read it:***

**Rom 4:22-24** “And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.” 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 ***but also for us. It*** [God’s righteousness] ***shall be imputed to us who believe in Him*** who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead...”

Now with this understanding, when you read **Romans 4:20-25**, slowly and prayerfully, you’ll understand that CHRIST’S PERFECTION, His perfect righteousness is ***imputed*** to us, ***if*** we, *as* we, walk with Him. IF we believe in Him also means to absolutely trust, rely and obey Him. Read it. This is what it means to “*put on Christ*”. God in heaven *sees Christ’s perfection* now, not our imperfect failings, if we daily go before the throne and ask for more of the spirit, and power to go His way. We prove this new relationship by our new works, our new way of living. But it is grace that saves us, then we confirm that new relationship by walking a new and living way and doing righteous works. *Those of you who love Ephesians 2:8-9, should also love Ephesians 2:10, and vice versa. Those of you who love Romans 4:20-25, should also love James 2:18-24* where our faith in God is proven by our good faithful works. Love both sets of passages, for they are all in the Bible.

***Since we have both natures now, there is a fight, there is a struggle – and we must stop practicing the old way.***

**1 John 3:4-11** From New American Standard shows if we *practice* sin, the old way, we are not of God. Those who are of God no longer PRACTICE the sinful way as a matter of course, though they still stumble and fail from time to time.

So as we stumble, we pray **David’s prayer of repentance in Psalm 51:10** “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And ***renew a steadfast spirit*** within me.” God is the creator.

And – that NEW way we have, new heart, *should result in an exultant joy of God’s salvation*, according to ***Ps 51:12***. If you aren’t experiencing *joy* now in God’s way – if you still feel like a spiritual failure, unworthy, terrible, like a constant failure – ***then you haven’t gotten the picture yet! Keep your finger in Ps 51 and for now move to Ezek 36:24-27. God is our creator of this new life.***

**Ezek 36:24-27** “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 ***Then I*** will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; ***I*** will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 ***I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.***”

And once you have that joy, this is not just for ourselves. Keep reading what **David said, Ps. 51:13**: “Then I shall teach transgressors your way and sinners shall be converted to you.” This *new way*, and how we got it, *needs to be shared* – exultantly, as the woman at the well in John 4, went all through Samaria telling everyone about Jesus. *No wonder* in Acts 8 there were so many converted

later on. She had planted a lot of seed. The persecuted Christians went everywhere proclaiming the word (**Acts 8:4-5**).

So we need to ask for God's Spirit even more and more, and God is eager to give it to us when we ask (**Luke 11:13**). The holy spirit is what makes us grow, makes us converted, gives us the nature of God. Ask for it.

Yes, we must walk in His laws. Yes we must keep the commandments. But God gives us the heart to be able to! I do not subscribe at all to the notion that we have nothing to do in this process. No – we must walk with God. We must resist sin. We must fight or flee temptation. But God does give us the new heart to be able to do it.

And we must not go to the *other ditch*, as some do, and think this new creation is being formed by *our* works. NO! Paul said He did *not* want a righteousness from the law, but the Righteousness of God which is by *faith*! (Phil. 3:8-12). **Put all the verses together. Some love to focus just on the verses about grace.** Others seem to focus on the verses about *obedience* and works. put them *together* and we'll find the wonderful middle ground!

### **DO CONVERTED PEOPLE HAVE BAD, DECEITFUL HEARTS?**

**Let me correct a common misconception about our new heart.** **JEREMIAH 17:9** says the heart is desperately wicked. ***But is the new heart we're given as a gift from God, also desperately wicked, deceitful and*** contrary to Him?

No, brethren. A thousand times no! What a slap to God to call His new heart a deceitful one! It's *not*. And your new heart – the new spiritual one – loves God, loves His way.

**But**, our old nature heart still beats in our chest along with the new spiritual mind and heart God gives us. Therein lies the confusion and the warfare we feel within! And it will be so *until* the resurrection.

**Are WE bad people now?** “There is *no one* good but God”, Jesus said in Matt. 19:17. But when GOD COMES into our lives, we DO become good. ***Barnabas*** is called “a good man” in **Acts 11:24**. Jesus says “***a good man***, out of the good treasures of his heart brings forth good...” – **Luke 6:45**. *We are not to remain bad, we are to become good, even perfect, and apparently there is a way that happens. And we are good, when Christ lives in us. We become His creation – and Gen 1:31 says – and now apply it to His new creation, you and me: “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good”. God creates no junk!*

This new HEART results in a TOTAL *change*, but it takes *time*. Many of us think we're new because we've come to *believe new doctrines*. We now keep the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath holy, as Paul and the disciples and Christ did – and not Sunday. We now keep God's *holydays* – just like Paul and Christ did -- and not pagan holidays that have been given new Christian labels. Those *are* changes, but they're not the *main* changes we must make.

The main, biggest changes are **letting God change what we ARE**. What we *are* is what makes us do what we do. **Selfishness** begins to give way to thinking about others. Ego gives way – with God's spirit and new heart – to humility. Being *full of ourselves*, gives way to esteeming others

better than ourselves. Even ministers – they need to esteem other ministers as better than they – instead of trying to corral everyone into their fold to garner their tithes for themselves. Things like that! Our lustful ways give way to contentment with what we have. Our unforgiving nature becomes soft and sweet and forgiving. These are the things that make for a new creation. ***The biggest compliment you can have is to have someone ask you to share with them how you’ve changed so much – and you get a chance to tell them about Jesus Christ.***

***It IS a process! Paul told the Galatians he labored for them “til Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19). The new seed takes time to fully form.***

***The next thing is to ACCEPT what God’s word is telling us: put on the righteousness of God. Remember the parable of the wedding supper and the man who came to the King’s wedding without the wedding garment. Those wedding garments were *provided* to the guests – but *they* had to accept them, and put them on. (Matthew 22:1-14).***

In the same way, we are to put on Christ, like a garment (Galatians 3:27).

***Romans 13:13-14*** “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But ***Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.***” *Colossians 3:8-11 and Ephesians 4:20-24 are also good passages to study.*

***I love Isaiah 61:10 – He has clothed me with garments of salvation, HE has covered me with the robe of Righteousness.***

***This is not “just as I am” theology. We must change.*** Sure, you and I are *invited* while we were “just as I am”. But when we come to the wedding, We must *wash*, we must put *on* the wedding garment of His Righteousness, or we will not be allowed to be in the wedding! Before we put on new garments, the old garments of wickedness have to be stopped – a decision to stop being like the old way. We become slaves of righteousness (**Romans 6:19**).

The changes are to the core of what we are. We become different people than we were. We have to let God change us, and feed those changes with frequent Bible study, frequent praying, frequent meditation on God’s ways. We now seek those things above (**Colossians 3:1**)

***Colossians 3:1-4*** “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For *you* [the old carnal you] died, and ***your life is hidden with Christ*** in God. 4 When ***Christ who is our life*** appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” HALLELUJAH!!! Praise God!

***As time passes, if we’re doing these things, the fruit of the new way, the fruit of the spirit will become more and more evident in our lives. Proof of a new way. (Gal. 5:19-25)*** Just as God IS love – we, in time, will be characterized by love, joy, peace, and all aspects of the *fruit* of God’s spirit. In time, people should be able to look at you and me and say – “you know, you are love and joy personified. I wish I could have what you have”.



We will often fail in this fight. It doesn't change the fact that we are still new in God's eyes. He looks upon our desire, our heart, our intent. He sees the growth overall.

Let's praise God for this new life, rejoice in it.

***A new anything still can get dirty as it starts to be useful.*** A new car needs to be washed. A new baby needs its diapers changed. A new child will still fall and need its scrapes cleaned up. A new person still needs to be loved and hugged and comforted. *None* of those things means the baby, or the car, or the person aren't new. Yes, we'll stumble and scuff up our knees and get dirt on ourselves. Well, please pardon my dust, please pardon my failures, please let me come to your Passover and please be willing to be there to wash *my* feet, for they get dirty.

And please let me wash *yours*, for yours are also getting dirty from time to time. And I want to be the one to wash your feet, and I would humbly accept *you* washing *my* feet.

*We're a work – God's workmanship, HIS workmanship (Eph 2:10) – in progress. We're God's kids under construction, still developing! We're a temple with the stones being chipped away at, forming the shape and look the Master wants for us, so when we all come together at last – we will see the finished product, which will be to the glory of the master.*

*The individual block of ROCK used in the temple of God's house – you and I -- looks nothing yet like it shall be. But be patient. Thru the grinding of trials, the abrasion of the tools off the temple site – there is much dirt, much that is Unattractive. But when they are done, then the master orders the polishing to take place. So bright, so perfect that they won't stop til they see the reflection of the Master in that rock when He passes by.*

*But none of that happens right away.*

*You're that rock being carved out, chipped on, rubbed on, being polished – so you can be put among the others who are also being worked on. Only when we come together at the resurrection, will we see the perfection.*

**Rev 21:1-5 when its all said and done, here is what happens and is said at the end:**

Now I saw a **new** heaven and a **new** earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, **New Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, *for the former things have passed away.*"

**5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "*Behold, I make all things new.*"** And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

But before the new heavens, before the new earth – God began to make all things new – by beginning with YOU. *With you.* What an awesome thought: the newness of the entire UNIVERSE begins with Christ, then US, the firstfruits of His creation.

*So cherish your newness, your new father, your new future and use it. Don't ever listen to Satan's doubts about your newness, about you being a child, a new child of God. And accept *being a new creation.**

***“BEHOLD I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW”. And that new creation – starting with Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection – is continuing, as He makes you and me – brand new. Hallelujah, praise God.***

**Brethren, we’re not yet what we oughta be. We’re not yet *what we should be*, or even *can* be. But praise be to God by His grace, and by His new creation, we’re NOT what we were.**

**We are, right now, a new creation. Thanks be to our God and Savior, who made this possible.**

***Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is your servant Philip Shields saying “til next time – God encourage and refresh you always with the newness we have in Christ Jesus, our Lord”.***