

God's favorite Word

God loves new things! Throughout the Bible He talks about the new things He has given to us:

God gives us a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26).

God gives us a new spirit (Ezekiel 18:31).

God puts a new song in our hearts (Psalm 40:3).

He has given us a new name (Revelation 2:17).

He has given us a new self (Ephesians 4:24).

He makes us wholly new. 2 Corinthians 5:17 pulls it all together and says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away; behold all things have become new."

As human beings we sometimes have a hard time with change. Surrendering completely to Jesus and letting Him be completely in control of your life can be scary. However, what you need to realize is that the new things He brings to you will always be better than what you have right now. It is easy to just stay where you are and not face the challenge of moving forward. This is even true with our sins. We can find them hard to let go of and sometimes even find ourselves clinging to them. If we don't let go and surrender them to Jesus we won't make it very far.

Understand that God brings about change in our lives. In fact among the final words God will speak in human history will be "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). Change, when it is God directed, is a very good thing. When we change as people it can be a painful experience, but when God changes us it is always for the better.

The life of a believer is about being new, about being different and about being changed. If you are not changing, being transformed little by little, day by day feeling His victory, then what's up with your faith? Those people who are in Christ are being changed. That is why the Bible says we should "walk in newness of life." The words "newness of life" from Romans 6:4 does not mean new in time, but new in character, new in quality, a different person.

God wants to make us new. Think back to the time before you committed your life to Christ. Do you remember how you were a slave to certain sins? No matter how you tried, you fell back into those same patterns over and over again. The good news is that when you confess Christ as your Lord & Savior, God connects you with the resurrection power of Jesus Christ and the power of sin in your life is broken. Sin is still going to try to get your attention but it cannot boss you around anymore.

This is the picture Paul communicated in Romans 6:1-7. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."

Paul wanted us to know that we do not have to be under the demands of sin anymore. That need not be our experience, and by the power of God, it is not the experience of those who live in His resurrection power. Tragically, believers today are still living like they are under the power of sin. Before Christ we didn't have a choice. Now we do! Having a choice doesn't mean you won't be tempted, but we can choose to follow that temptation or listen to the Holy Spirit.

When Paul said that we have "been freed from sin," he was letting you and I know that the power of sin is broken in us. All who receive Christ personally have had their inclination to sin cut off or rendered inoperative. Sin is not in charge anymore; you don't have to do what it says. (Philippians 4:13) tells us that we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength. I believe that verse is underestimated—Christ is greater than anyone or anything. If we rely on Him we will succeed.

If we are still struggling with a certain sin, it is because we choose to remain in that sin. When we are tempted by sin we hear two things. One of them is the Holy Spirit telling you to draw strength from Him and flee (James 4:7-10) and the other is Satan telling you it is ok.

Hebrews 2:18 tells us that "because He himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted." It is a sad thing to have the means to escape, yet choose not to act upon it.

If we are in Christ, we are not a slave to any sin. In Christ, we have the power to be the person that God wants us to be. No pattern of thinking holds you. No pattern of behavior enslaves us. The chains of sin are broken in us; we are free to do what is right. As you walk with Jesus, always let Him be in control.

We need Christ's strength in our lives to help us, but what steps are you taking to avoid sin? (Example: a person with a drinking problem would just stay away from bars & parties with alcohol, etc.)

Are you capturing your thoughts immediately and giving them to Christ? What Scripture's can you quote to help ward off sinful thoughts? (Ephesians 6:10-18) Are you showing others that you have a relationship with Jesus? (John 14:15, 15:14 & 1 John 2:3-4)

What must you do to receive the Holy Spirit and have a Godly walk? (Acts 5:32) "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

God asks us to be active. We are required to do things in our walk. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead He told Lazarus to "come forth." He didn't just raise Him up and send him on his way. He spoke to Lazarus and Lazarus had to respond. Jesus wants us to listen and obey. Just as Lazarus had to come forth, so do we. We need to walk in faith and trust in Him when He asks us to do something. And when we are tempted by sin and we hear Him telling us to resist the devil, our strength lies in His voice, in His grace and in His mercy.

As you read your Bible, ask God to show you what He wants you to know. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and lead you. Come to Him with a clean heart; confess to Him your sins, your doubts, your fears. Don't allow un-confessed sin to block communication with our Lord. This doesn't have to be a huge process. Just tell Him. Let Him take away the impurities. Then the channel of communication will be open and He will do great things in your life.

You need to confess your sins and heed what the Holy Spirit says. As a believer, who has the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus, ask yourself: "Does the Holy Spirit have all of me?" "Does He control me?" The fact is, He does not control every believer. Paul writes to believers in Ephesians 5:17-18, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit" "Be filled with the Spirit." The Greek word there, *plarusta*, means "to be controlled. God does not give suggestions, just commands. And because He commands us to be filled, then it is possible. But you cannot fill yourself; God fills everyone who asks Him to. There's no special class of people who have something from the Holy Spirit that none of the rest of us have.

At the moment of salvation, you were baptized into the Holy Spirit. That will never change. But many times during your life you can be filled by the Spirit as you ask Him to completely control you.

When the Holy Spirit fills us, He takes control of our tongue and we say things that bless, encourage, and nourish God's people. When the Holy Spirit has control of our body we can serve people and be part of building God's kingdom. When the Holy Spirit fills us, He occupies our mind and we think thoughts that please Him. He gives us the ability to obey the truth of His Word in a way that impacts our lives.