



Bicycles,
Roller Skates,
& Peanut Butter

Contemplative
Verse #10

Four steps to live

When Jesus was crucified, He did away with the old humanity (all that was in Adam). We were included in this act. As the last Adam, He ended the old race; as the second Man, He began the new race. Through His resurrection, we are included in this new life.

Romans 6:5 says, "If we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." This means we died with Him as the last Adam and live with Him as the second Man. The Cross transforms us from being in Adam to being in Christ.

1. **As the Last Adam:**

- Jesus represents all of humanity.
- His union with humanity began at His birth and ended with His death and burial.
- He took all that was in Adam (the first human) to the cross, where He faced judgment and death on our behalf.

2. **As the Second Man:**

- Jesus is the Head of a new race.
- Our union with Him begins with His resurrection and continues forever.
- In His death, He dealt with the old humanity; in His resurrection, He started a new humanity.

Our old life ends with the Cross, and our new life begins with the resurrection. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, it says, "If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation; old things

have passed away, and new things have come." The Cross ends the old creation, and out of that death comes a new creation in Christ, the second Man.

If we are "in Adam," we inherit everything that comes from Adam naturally and without effort, including sin. Similarly, if we are "in Christ," we receive everything that comes from Christ by grace, through simple faith, without effort on our part.

The practical aspect of receiving everything in Christ by grace may seem unclear. How does it work in real life?

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 of Romans outline the steps for living a normal Christian life. These steps are:

1. **Knowing:** Understanding our identity in Christ.
2. **Reckoning:** Counting ourselves dead to sin but alive to God.
3. **Presenting:** Offering ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness.
4. **Walking in the Spirit:** Living by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We need to take all four steps to live this life fully. As we study these steps, we trust the Holy Spirit to enlighten us and help us take the first step forward.

When you realized that full salvation was already provided through the Cross, you accepted it, thanked God, and felt peace and joy. Both salvation and sanctification are received in the same way—by faith, not by effort.

God's way of delivering us from sin is different from human efforts. Humans try to suppress sin by overcoming it, but God removes the sinner. Many Christians think they need to be stronger to overcome sin, but this is not true Christianity. God's method is not to make us stronger but

to make us weaker, setting us free from sin by crucifying our old self, not by helping it to do anything.

For years, you may have tried unsuccessfully to control yourself, but once you understand the truth, you'll recognize your powerlessness and see that God has done it all. This realization ends human self-effort.

The Light of Revelation (poem)

To live a life in Christ, we need, A knowing deep, a heart that's freed. Not just in mind, but spirit bright, to see in Christ, our guiding light.

How do you know your sins are gone? Not by mere words, but heart's own dawn. A light that shines within your soul, God's revelation, making whole.

Salvation's truth, you just perceive, by grace from God, in whom you believe. So too, deliverance from sin's snare, Revealed by God, beyond compare.

In chapters deep of Romans' way, we find the steps to walk each day. First, known in heart, and then confess, Reckon with faith, in righteousness.

Present yourself to God's embrace, walk in the Spirit, find your place. For in His light, we see our role, assured in Christ, He makes us whole.

This knowledge not by words alone, but by the Spirit, deeply shown. In Christ, we see our lives unfold, A truth eternal, firm and bold.

We need to understand that our soul and natural energy stay with us until we die. Until then, we need to continuously deny ourselves and let the Cross work within us. This lifelong service is based on the command to "deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). We can't avoid this; those who do are not worthy to follow Jesus (Matt. 10:38) and cannot be His

disciples (Luke 14:27). Death and resurrection must remain central in our lives for the Spirit to rise within us.

There will be crises that can transform our lives and service for God. These are turning points where, through deep and difficult experiences, our natural strength is weakened, and we stop trusting ourselves. God may take us through harsh and painful experiences to bring us to this point. Eventually, we may lose our initial enthusiasm for doing Christian work, and even dread it. But it's at this point that God can truly begin to use us.



You could say that the "self" can be a principal interrupter in our relationship with God. This happens in various ways, such as:

1. **Distractions:** Our thoughts and emotions can divert our focus from prayer and spiritual practices.
2. **Ego and Pride:** Focusing on our own achievements or desires instead of humbly seeking God's will.
3. **Doubts and Insecurities:** Questioning our faith or feeling unworthy can disrupt our connection with God.
4. **Physical Discomfort:** Bodily needs and discomforts can take our attention away from spiritual matters.
5. **Social Concerns:** Worrying about how we appear to others can make us self-conscious and less focused on God.

Understanding these potential interruptions helps us to address them and foster a deeper, more focused relationship with God. By acknowledging these aspects of the "self," we can work on minimizing their impact and aligning our hearts and minds more fully with God's presence.

The Self's Interruption (poem)

The self, a subtle, constant voice, Distracting from the higher choice. With thoughts and worries, doubts and fears, it interrupts as God draws near.

Our ego, pride, and worldly mind, can lead the soul and heart to blind. In prayer, we struggle to remain, Focused on the divine refrain.

Yet in the stillness, we must seek, to quiet self, and let God speak. To set aside the self's demand and trust our lives in God's own hand.

For every thought that draws away, we gently guide our hearts to stay. In faith and love, we find the way to keep the self at bay each day.

Through discipline and daily grace, we seek to find that sacred space. Where self is silent, God is clear, In prayer and presence, ever near.

"self" will interrupt prayer and devotional time in various ways. Here's how it can happen:

Distractions:

- **Thoughts:** Your mind might wander to daily concerns, plans, or worries.
- **Emotions:** Strong feelings, like stress or excitement, can pull your focus away from prayer.

Ego:

- **Pride:** Thinking too highly of yourself or focusing on your achievements rather than on humility before God.
- **Self-Centeredness:** Focusing on personal desires rather than aligning with God's will.

Doubts:

- **Questioning Faith:** Doubts about the effectiveness of prayer or your worthiness to pray can interrupt your connection.
- **Insecurity:** Feeling unworthy or unsure about what to say can disrupt your focus.

Physical Discomfort:

- **Self-Consciousness:** Worrying about how you appear to others if you're praying in a group setting.

Techniques to Stay Focused:

- **Preparation:** Take a moment to quiet your mind and body before starting your prayer.
- **Mindfulness:** Focus on being present in the moment, acknowledging distractions and gently bringing your attention back to prayer.
- **Regular Practice:** Consistent prayer habits can help train your mind to stay focused.

Understanding these interruptions can help you address them and maintain a more focused and meaningful prayer experience.

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A New Year, A New Path

As we step into a new year, it's a perfect time to incorporate the wisdom and messages we've discussed. Here's a reflective guide to help you align your life more closely with these principles:

1. Reflect and Recommit

- **Daily Reflection:** Start each day with a moment of reflection and prayer. Consider the teachings of self-denial, humility, and spiritual growth.
- **Commitment to Growth:** Recommit to your spiritual journey, acknowledging where you've come from and where you want to go.

2. Embrace Humility and Faith

- **Letting Go of Ego:** Recognize the moments when pride and ego interrupt your spiritual connection. Practice humility by focusing on serving others and seeking God's guidance.
- **Trust in Divine Guidance:** Remember that your faith is not about your strength, but about God's power. Trust that He is leading you through every step.

3. Practical Steps of Faith

- **Know Your Identity in Christ:** Understand deeply that you are in Christ. This knowledge comes from divine revelation, and it's the foundation of your spiritual life.
- **Walk in the Spirit:** Make a conscious effort to live by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This involves daily decisions to align your actions with your faith.

4. Overcoming Self-Interruptions

- **Mindfulness in Prayer:** Practice being fully present during prayer. Acknowledge distractions and gently refocus on your conversation with God.
- **Physical and Emotional Awareness:** Pay attention to your body and emotions, but don't let them control your spiritual practice. Find balance and harmony in your daily life.

5. Living Out the Message

- **Acts of Service:** Show love and kindness to others through your actions. Let your life be a testament to the principles of humility, self-denial, and faith.
- **Spiritual Discipline:** Seek God, continue to study the Word, pray consistently, and seek fellowship with other believers. These practices will strengthen your spiritual walk.

A Poem for the New Year

*As dawn of the new year greets the sky, in quiet reflection,
let hearts comply. With lessons learned and faith anew, to
walk the path God's laid for you.*

*Embrace the humble, set ego aside, in faith's true journey,
let God be your guide. With every step, in spirit's light, Find
joy and peace in God's sight.*

*Commit to growth, in heart and mind, in every prayer, true
solace find. For in Christ's love, we're made anew, And in
His grace, our paths pursue.*

May this new year be a time of deep spiritual growth and renewal for you. the first reason why a life lived in God is a life

that masters time. One can see the

distractions for what they are and center down on the things that really matter. But of course, this doesn't mean that Christians do less than other people. (Look at Jesus again and think of those people -- many of the busiest you have known -- who have something of this quality.) And that leads me to the second reason for the mastery of time.

Those who live in God have not only got their priorities straight, but they have also learned that to live with God is to live always in the present, with him who is the eternal Now.

We all know people who live in the past -- and we usually laugh at them -- for they are harmless. But it is much easier, and much more dangerous, to live in the future. Remember how Jesus coupled mistrust of God with anxiety -- always worrying about the morrow? And that applies not only to the morrow but to the next job. The reason why we get harassed, again, is that we are always thinking of what we have still got to do rather than of what we are doing.

Living in the present means squarely accepting and responding to it as God's moment for me now while it is called "today" rather than wishing it were yesterday or tomorrow.

A Journey to Understanding

In a small, peaceful town, there lived three friends: Jack, Constance, and Michael. Each had their own unique journey into the Christian faith, shaped by different experiences and scriptures.

Jack: The Diligent Scholar

Jack had always been a diligent student of the Bible. He knew many verses by heart and could recite them with ease. Despite his extensive knowledge, Rich felt a persistent struggle within him. His faith seemed to lack a deeper connection that he couldn't quite grasp, leaving him searching for something more meaningful.

Constance: The Emotional Devotee

Constance was a woman of deep emotion and feeling. Her faith was vibrant and expressive, often overwhelming her during prayers with the presence of God. However, these intense experiences left her drained, and she found it difficult to sustain her faith in everyday life.

Michael: The Practical Servant

Michael was practical and down-to-earth. He believed in living out his faith through actions and service. His life was a testament to his dedication to helping others. Yet, despite his efforts, Michael often felt frustrated and struggled to understand the deeper spiritual truths of his faith.

The Church Retreat

One day, their paths converged at a local church retreat. The pastor, a wise and gentle man named Pastor Luke, spoke to them about Romans 6:6: "Our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, and we would no longer be enslaved to sin."

The Message of Romans 6:6

Pastor Luke explained that understanding the work of Jesus on the Cross is crucial for living the normal Christian life. He emphasized that different Christians have different experiences and scriptures that guide them, but these experiences are complementary rather than conflicting.

1. Jack's Revelation:

- Jack realized that his struggle wasn't about knowing more scriptures but about understanding the finished work of Jesus. He started to pray for revelation, asking God to open his heart to the true meaning of the Cross.

2. Constance's Balance:

- Constance understood that her intense emotional experiences, while valuable, needed to be rooted in the knowledge of Jesus' sacrifice. She began to seek a balance between her feelings and the truth of the Cross, finding a more sustainable and profound faith.

3. Michael's Purpose:

- Michael learned that his practical actions needed to be supported by spiritual understanding. He began to meditate on the work of Jesus on the Cross, finding strength and purpose in the knowledge that Jesus is the Vine, and he is a branch.

A Shared Journey

As the friends shared their revelations under a starlit sky, they realized that their journeys were not just individual but interwoven by the revelation of Christ's work on the Cross. They understood that living the normal Christian

life was not about their efforts but about God's revelation and grace.

Their friendship grew stronger, and their faith deepened as they continued to walk the path of understanding, united by the knowledge that they were all "in Christ."

As they pursued God and a future eternity.

