

# THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN FOUR WORDS

BY DR. JERRY VINES

*By the Book*™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study Series from Jerry Vines Ministries  
2295 Towne Lake Parkway  
Suite 116 #249  
Woodstock, GA 30189

## Let's Begin

*The missionary E. Stanley Jones once met with Ghandi. During the conversation, he asked him, "Mr. Ghandi, though you quote the words of Christ often, why is that you appear to so adamantly reject becoming His follower?" Ghandi replied, "Oh, I don't reject your Christ. I love your Christ. It's just that so many of you Christians are so unlike your Christ." Such may be the sharpest dagger ever flung at historic Christianity. When Christians do not live the faith they proclaim, the faith appears to the world, like it or not, as a total sham.*

*In the first five chapters Paul has been clear to explain precisely how a person becomes a believer, how one enters into a right relationship with God. Beginning in chapter 6 and extending through chapter 8, Paul shifts his focus to a thorough explanation of living out the Christian life. In other words, while the concern before was justification, Paul's primary concern now is sanctification. And, according to Paul, sanctification can be easily explained by teasing out four particular words.*

*As we work our way through chapter 6, let's follow the outline below:*

- I. The First Word of the Christian Life is KNOW (vv. 1-10)**
- II. The Second Word of the Christian Life is RECKON (v. 11)**
- III. The Third Word of the Christian Life is YIELD (vv. 12-13)**
- IV. The Fourth Word of the Christian Life is FREEDOM (vv. 14-32)**

## I. The First Word of the Christian Life is KNOW (vv. 1-10)

Soon after we are saved, we discover we not only have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (3:10), we are still sinners before God. We have done wrong because we are wrong. In other words, we were born with a sinful nature. Being saved by faith *secures our acceptance* with God (5:1). Being saved, however, does not *stop our attraction* to sin. This is the spiritual juncture where sanctification comes in.

The difference between justification and sanctification is the difference between something once for all and something ongoing. When a person places faith in the Lord Jesus, the person is justified before God, the righteousness of Christ being imputed to his or her account. Even more, the person justified before God through faith cannot be more or less justified. Instead, being justified before God is a once-for-all act, a proclamation by God Himself. It cannot be overturned or repeated.

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On the other hand, sanctification is a process, a never-ending faith journey which continues throughout this life. A person can and is in a process of becoming what Christ intends one to be. We are, in the words of Paul elsewhere, being conformed to the image of Christ (8:29; cp. also 12:2; Col. 3:10). Thus, we are not sanctified instantly *as* we are justified through faith; our day-to-day life continues to be sanctified by Christ.

Even so, *the first word of the Christian life is KNOW*; that is, it is something we must *understand*. Paul reminds us with a question, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness



of his resurrection” (vv. 3-5). When we were born naturally, our birth was akin to Adam’s creation. Thus, we are described as being “in Adam” (1 Cor. 15:22). However, our second birth identifies us as being “in Christ” (8:1-2; 12:5; 16:7). And, Paul leaves no doubt we are to know we are identified with Christ, being in Christ.

First, we are to know the *reality* of being in Christ—“know ye not...?” The question Paul asks assumes the answer will be positive. We are to know what daily effect Jesus’ death secured for we who believe. Christ died and we were “baptized into his death.” In addition, His death was a substitutionary death, a death He died in our place. But that is not all; we were “buried with him” (v. 4). Clearly, this burial took place when we publicly professed Him through our baptism. Baptism symbolically washed our sins away (Ps. 32:1; Micah 7:19; Acts 3:19; 22:16).

*Water baptism beautifully pictures both our justification through faith and our sanctification in Him.*

And, just as we are buried with Him, we are raised with Him (v. 5). Water baptism beautifully pictures both our justification through faith and our sanctification in Him.

We are able also to know the *results* of being in Christ. Our “old man” was “crucified with him” and the “body of sin” was destroyed (v. 6). In other words, we were freed from sin (see below for our freedom in Christ). There remains a problem, however. We do not consistently live as if we are free from sin (v. 9). We now are in a position to explore the second word of our life in Christ.

### Reflection Connection

*Are you able to say, without the least reservation, you KNOW you are saved? Why or why not? Do you think all believers can know whether they are saved? Explain.*

## II. The Second Word of the Christian Life is RECKON (v. 11)

Paul writes, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 11). To “reckon” is to underscore, to emphasize. Whereas before, to know meant to understand our life in Christ, to reckon is to emphasize our life in Christ, to live in the power of Christ’s Spirit. The natural question arises: exactly what are we to reckon?

First, we are to underscore the *crucifixion*—“dead...unto sin...through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The life we live should be a life of death. Such a perspective sounds strange, especially since we have been transferred from death to life (John 5:24; cp. Col. 1:13). However, the death we live is a death to sin. Our problem is, we do not live as if we are dead to sin.

Secondly, we are to underscore the *resurrection*. Paul says we must be “alive unto God.” Christ’s resurrection life is available to us. When He came out of the tomb, new life became a reality for us! The key word upon which to focus is RECKON. “Reckon” is a bookkeeping term used of recording factual data. While used in

### Reflection Connection

*Reflect on your daily routine. What would your life look like if every moment you lived “dead to sin”? What ways would be different from the way you live now? Explain.*



the first century to record factual numbers, the facts concerning our spiritual life has zero to do with numbers. Instead, we are to live based upon the factual data of what Christ did for us. There are days, for example, when we will not “feel saved.” We may be discouraged because we failed to get a job promotion or because we received a notice that the bank turned us down on a home loan application. The fact is, however, we are saved whether or not we “feel” saved! We are to reckon ourselves alive with Christ, dead to sin, dead to the old life.

### III. The Third Word of the Christian Life is YIELD (vv. 12-13)

Not only are we to know we are in Christ and reckon we are in Christ, but also we are to yield ourselves to Christ. In other words, the third key word of the Christian life is *YIELD*. And, to yield means we must undertake something. Carefully note the Apostle Paul’s words, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (vv. 12-13). While the first key word “know” had to do with the *mind* and the second key word “reckon” with the *heart*, our third key word “yield,” has to do with the *will*.

Before our coming to Christ, finding peace with God through faith in Him (5:1), we possessed only one nature—the sin nature. Now, however, we have two natures: one is crucified with Christ, the other is alive unto God. And, we are controlled by the nature to which we yield ourselves. We may view this spiritual duality from two perspectives. First, we may view it *negatively*. The negative perspective is what Paul means when he writes, “Let not sin therefore reign...[to] obey...lusts...” (v. 12). Sin is pictured as a monstrous tyrant (cp. 5:21).

While we do not know what it is like to live under a tyrant king, we surely may get a sense of it because sin is a tyrant king in a real but spiritual sense! Sin demands obedience and employs lust to force us into its service. When we submit to lusts we allow sin to reign over us as our king.

Furthermore, the Apostle warns us to “neither yield members...unto sin” (v. 13a). Paul is referencing our body, a physical capsule containing our mind, heart and will. We may think of it as a vessel, a house, or, as Paul elsewhere says, a covering (2 Cor. 4:1-4). We are not to yield to this body of sin.

We may also view the spiritual duality we have from a second perspective—the *positive* perspective. Recall the Apostle Paul’s words, “but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (v. 13b). We yield ourselves to God which results in righteousness. Noteworthy is the tense of the verb, “yield.” In the Greek, it is the tense which means once-for-all, or a “totality.” In other words, we are

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#### Reflection Connection

*Do you think there is a difference between sins of the body and sins of the soul? Why or why not? In addition, supposing there is a difference, do you think one sin is worse than another? Explain.*



to once-for-all, totally yield ourselves to God. Paul is exhorting us to make a definite decision to present ourselves to Him, a deliberate, voluntary transfer of total possession of our life to God. We are to put ourselves down on God's side, unwaveringly committed to being all He calls us to be. In short, we are to yield to Him.

#### IV. The Fourth Word of the Christian Life is FREEDOM (vv. 14-32)

By far this is the longest section within this chapter which reveals the four key words of the Christian life. Nevertheless, the term freedom captures nicely the thrust of Paul's concern here, "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (v. 18). We may easily discern what it means to be freed from sin.

*First, being freed from sin means a new slavery* (vv. 14-18). In a real and, in many ways, a shocking sense, we may say no one is free. In other words, there is no escape from slavery. All persons are slaves to something or someone. Paul was careful to explain our new slavery. For example, he describes the *fetters* of our new slavery in a rhetorical question: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (v. 16). Sin was earlier compared to a ruthless ruler (5:21); here, however, Paul pictures sin as a cruel master. The world clamors for a freedom which, in essence, is a crude slavery. For instance, the "free love" ideal of an unbelieving culture where people "freely" pursue sensual lusts reduces them to a cultural prison where unrighteousness rules. In reality, the people are enslaved to sensual lusts.

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Paul also describes the *freedom* of our new slavery. He writes, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (vv. 17-18). The life of sin is a life of *incarceration*. Only when we come to Christ do we come to true freedom. We actually walk in new bondage. But the bondage is servitude to righteousness, not wickedness, and leads to rapture not ruin.

Take a close look at Paul's words in verse 17b, "but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Believers who walk in the Lord Jesus Christ are believers who, within their heart, obey delivered doctrine. Literally, translated, Paul is saying, we obeyed, "that mould of doctrine into which you were delivered." The picture Paul is drawing is the picture of melted metal poured into a mold. The metal, once cooled and hardened, becomes like the mold into which it is poured. Scriptural truth is the mold into which believers are poured. Preaching the Bible is God's way for believers to become like what He calls them to be.



### Reflection Connection

*When you think of expository preaching, what do you think it means? Explain. As a general rule, do you think the church has too much, not enough or an acceptable amount of expository preaching? Why or why not?*

*Second, being freed from sin also means a new loyalty.* Note Paul's words, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness" (vv. 19-20). Paul gets his point across by pointing out clear contrasts to the "before, after" aspect of being in Christ. For example, before one was saved, one was loyal to sinfulness. Paul speaks here of the "infirmity of your flesh," "uncleanness," and the most vivid picture of all, "iniquity unto iniquity." His intent obviously is to point to the ever-increasing wickedness toward which a person outside of Christ drifts. Sin becomes a vicious chain of events which cannot be stopped until it catapults one to total destruction at the judgment bar of God. The only One Who can free a person from this destruction is Jesus Christ, which brings Paul to his contrast.

A saved person is not loyal to sinfulness but to righteousness. The believer "yields" his or her "members [as a ] slave...unto holiness" (vv. 19b-20). When one is a slave of sin, one is free from righteousness; but as a slave of righteousness, one is freed from sin.

*Finally, being freed from sin also means a new destiny.* Paul seals his case, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (vv. 21-22). Once again, Paul employs a contrast: the destiny of a *sinner* (v. 21) with the destiny of a *saint* (v. 22). When the sinner comes to the end of this life of sin, what will he or she have to show for it? Waste! Shame! And, sadly, death! (v. 23a). On the other hand, a saint reaps salvation as a free gift (v. 23b).

### Golden Greek Nugget

In verse one, Paul rhetorically asks, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" He obviously was addressing some who evidently had suggested that very thing! The term behind "shall we continue" implies a sense which means "to remain on." In other words, Paul is asking if, after one comes to Christ through grace, should one remain in sin in order for grace to remain as well? His answer in short is, "God forbid!" The longer answer is in the remainder of chapter 6.

### Wrap Up

*Paul makes our life in Christ as easy as remembering four key words. The first word is KNOW and has to do with our understanding. The second word we learned is RECKON, which underscores our daily commitment to live for Christ. The next word is YIELD and undertakes to reveal the process of living in Christ, a firm matter of the will. Finally, the word FREEDOM sums up our new life in Christ and unveils the new slavery, new loyalty, and new destiny we have in Him. The believer who nails these four words down has a sturdy foundation in understanding our new life in Christ.*

