The Exchanged Life

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Have you ever considered how many “exchanges” are a part of your daily life? The fact is that the principle of “exchange” is woven into the fabric of almost every area of our lives. Every purchase we make is an exchange in the form of money for goods or services. Now consider the number of exchanges that you made that affect you just from the time you woke up until you got to the breakfast table. The bed you slept in, the blankets that warmed you, the electricity that ran your alarm clock, and the water you showered in are all because of exchanges you have made. So too, the soap and shampoo you used, the clothes you wear, the table you sit at, and the food you eat are also results of purchases. Exchange is such a big part of our modern lives that we take it for granted, failing to see that it is involved in most areas of our lives.

When I look at how exchange is part of the very fabric of my life, I can more clearly be reminded that the greatest of all exchanges is something God did for us in Christ. The Great Exchange, the one that takes place when we confess Jesus as our Lord, is the greatest of all exchanges. At that very moment we exchange our sin for Christ’s righteousness, and pass from death to life.

As we embrace the wonderful reality of the Great Exchange we can begin to live life in a way that has real spiritual power. Our ministry theme this year is “Let Your Light Shine,” and perhaps the most effective way we can do that is by letting Christ shine through us. The essence of the Exchanged Life is summed up this way: “His life for mine, now my life for his.” When we live this way, letting Christ shine through us, then we live in spiritual power and victory.

In this issue of The Sower we will explore the complete union we have with Christ that occurred when we got born again and received the gift of holy spirit that is now sealed within us. We will also explore how the Great Exchange gives us the opportunity to live the Exchanged Life. In addition, we will look at the exchanged life from the perspective of living it through the marriage covenant.

God has promised us a wonderful life in eternity with Him, but right now we are also able to enjoy the many benefits of the gift of holy spirit He has given us, if we learn to live the Exchanged Life. We hope this issue of The Sower will inspire you to press forward into living the Exchanged life in a powerful way.

Living victoriously through Christ,

Dan Gallagher
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Acrostichion, or, in English, Acrostic. An Acrostichion is when letters are used at the beginning or end of a number of lines. The letters can be the letters of the alphabet, or can spell a word or phrase.

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Most Christians rejoice when they learn that through Jesus’ sacrificial death they receive the complete forgiveness of their sins. At the moment anyone confesses Jesus as his Lord and believes in his resurrection, he receives the gift of holy spirit and a great exchange takes place. The essence of this remarkable exchange is that a person’s sins are transferred to Christ, and in return his righteousness, which is the righteousness of God, is transferred to the person.

2 Corinthians 5:21
God made him [Christ] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God.

God established that the consequence of sin is death, and since we have all sinned we all deserve to die. Death is the righteous or just outcome of our actions, but Jesus died in our place. He not only exchanged our sins for his righteousness, he also willingly died a brutal death on the cross in our stead. As the authors Jerry Bridges and Bob Bevington state in their book, The Great Exchange:

“Once [we] are in Christ, sinners become the righteousness of God, because God credits (imputes) Christ’s perfect righteousness to them. In the eyes of God, these sinners have fulfilled the requirement of the law because the Sinless One fulfilled the law on their behalf by his perfect life and obedient death on the cross; they are in effect, clothed in Christ’s righteousness.”

“Thus, the Great Exchange that results from the death of the perfect sacrifice is a twofold substitution: the charging of the believer’s sin to Christ results in God’s forgiveness, and the crediting of Christ’s righteousness to the believer results in his justification.”

This exchange takes place at the moment of the person’s new birth and it is the greatest gift one could ever receive.

Colossians 2:12-14
(12) having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. (13) When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, (14) having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Living on a different level
Despite having received such a wonderful gift from God, far too many Christians fail to thrive in the new realities of God’s forgiveness and grace. The reality is that on the spiritual
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level, every unsaved person is walking around with a death sentence on his or her head and is merely awaiting execution. Once they accept Christ, that sentence is not only pardoned, they are viewed by The Righteous Judge as being completely free of any wrongdoing and then, amazingly, released to a place even better than anything they ever could have achieved on their own merit. That is grace upon grace!

It is as if we are standing on the gallows, noose around our neck and the executioner’s hand readied to pull the lever. A herald yells, “STOP, the Judge pardons that man, let him go free!” We are ushered down from the place of execution, given gifts, and sent on our way with one instruction, “Go and live up to the grace you have been given.”

There are three responses that we can have to God’s gift of forgiveness and salvation. When the prison doors of death row are opened to us we can show our thankfulness by going out and living a life of thankfulness and obedience to Christ. The second option is that we can run from the jail cell yelling, whooping, hollering and “partying hard,” continuing in our old ways. And the last option is to stay in jail, pulling the door closed, choosing the rules and regulations of the prison regime instead of walking in the light of our freedom in Christ. Sadly, as we look around we see that far too few believers make the first choice.

For example, today, it is common for single Christian men and women to live together as if they were married when they are not, ignoring the commands of God for righteous and holy living. Furthermore, far too many Christians drink in excess; use intoxicants like marijuana and other illegal drugs, and engage in many other types of unholy behavior. The fact that there is no measurable difference between the divorce rate among Christians and non-Christians is a blemish on the Body of Christ. Also, the use of pornography is rampant in the male Christian community, some studies indicating that 50 percent of the men are involved with it and the numbers may even run as high as 70%.

Disturbingly, in many cases the world seems to be having a greater effect on Christians than Christians do on the world. Carnal Christians, those who practice worldly behavior, are nothing new. The apostle Paul addressed similar issues with the first century saints of Corinth.

1 Corinthians 3:1 and 3
(1) Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ.
(3) You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?

And then, there are others who fall back into the false security of rules and regulations, just like the Galatians did in the first-century church.
Galatians 5:1
It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

In spite of what could be a discouraging picture for Christians, we can praise God that in every generation there are always some who respond to God’s grace by living for Christ. Responding the way God wants us to is not about being a “holier than thou” kind of person. The godly man or woman recognizes that they are still very much a sinner, bearing the burden of the flesh and an “old man” sin nature. They are not perfect but they have a deep relationship with the one who is, Jesus Christ their savior. Whether publically known or not, these Christians live their faith at a remarkably high level, because they are living the Exchanged Life.

The Exchanged Life: the source of powerful Christian living
The Christians who live the Exchanged Life almost seem to have tapped into a secret knowledge, or maybe relatively unknown power source, that only those with a TOP SECRET clearance can have. The truth is there is no “secret knowledge,” but rather believers who live daily in the power of God have responded to the Great Exchange by living the “Exchanged Life.” The essence of the “Exchanged Life” is summed up in the words of the Apostle Paul.

1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20
(19) Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;
(20) you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

2 Corinthians 5:15
And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Christ died but now lives. Not only is he seated at the right hand of the Father but, because of the nature of the gift of holy spirit he has given us, he can now live on earth through us. In the book of Colossians we learn that the gift of holy spirit is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”7 The holy spirit in us is not a sentient being, meaning it does not think or act on its own. Rather, it speaks to us only what it hears from our Lord, allowing us to communicate on a spiritual level. It also has the capacity for tremendous spiritual power, which we are charged to use in obedience to Christ’s directions and in keeping with his character. This is why it is so important to “no longer live for ourselves but for him.”

We can be his agents, doing his bidding and works just as if he were personally here. When we live in obedience to him as Lord, his desires become the desires of our hearts, and his ways our ways. Instead of being our normal worldly selves, selfish, self-centered, and self-focused, we strive to live according to our new spiritual nature, selfless, Christ-centered, and other-focused. Jesus showed us that living this way means that, like him in the Garden of Gethsemane, our heart’s desire becomes, “…not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Jesus’ love for the Father was the fuel that fired his passion. When we live the Exchanged Life, it becomes ours too.

The power of the Exchanged Life is that no matter where we are, no matter what situation we are in, it can be just as if Jesus is there. Literally wherever we go, he goes too. We are truly his ambassadors, acting as divine agents of light in a dark and evil world. When we are with someone who is in pain or suffering, we can reach out to them with all the love and compassion of Christ himself because he is there with us via the gift of holy spirit. Sometimes we have no idea what a person needs or what we should say, but Jesus knows. Just like when his words pierced the heart of the woman at the well, we too can do the same for people when we allow him to be expressed through us.

The devil must have trembled the day he realized that every born again believer had the potential of being a “Christ” on earth. He would have greatly preferred to deal with one Jesus than the millions of him that are anywhere a follower of Christ is. This is spiritually such a big deal that God even tells us that had he and his henchmen known this, they never would have killed Jesus.10
Satan is not threatened much by weak or compromising Christians. Every believer in Christ has great potential spiritual power, but potential matters little unless it is activated. A fully loaded gun has the potential for self-defense, but if the owner will not pull the trigger the potential really does not matter. Similarly, Christians who will not “pull the trigger” on their spiritual power are not too much of a threat to the Devil. In contrast, Christians who are spiritually minded and put the things of God first are powerful threats against God’s arch nemesis, the Devil, and he knows it. Every Christian living the Exchanged Life sends shivers down Satan’s spine because they walk with genuine spiritual power and authority.

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The problem of the “Old Man”

As much as we may desire to be like Christ, there still remains for all of us one big obstacle standing in our way. God calls this obstruction “old man,” and it is our responsibility to discipline ourselves to ignore him and and beaten down greatly.

Romans 8:5
Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Romans 8:11 and 12
(11) And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.
(12) Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.

Whenever God tells us to do something, He always gives us the ability to do it. He tells us not to live according to the “sinful nature” and to set our minds on what the Spirit desires. Those who practice the Exchanged Life do not live perfect lives. Rather, they are honest in acknowledging their sinful weaknesses and they never quit in their attempts to crucify the “old man.” Unfortunately, no matter how often we do so, the sin nature tries to resurrect itself anew every day. Over and over again we reaffirm the spiritual reality that he is dead and that “greater is he that is in me, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). What a wonderful day it will be when we receive our new glorious bodies, bodies that will be just like his, free of the “old man” sin nature (Phil. 3:20 and 21).

Not by our power, but by his

Until the Rapture, we must continue to train ourselves in godliness, to put off the sin nature, and to live in obedience to the new nature of the spirit of Christ in us. The way to do that is not by relying upon our strength, but upon Christ’s. Paul describes for us how he struggled against great opposition. He pleaded with the Lord for help. Jesus replied, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9) In essence, Jesus said, “It’s not by your power that you will overcome Paul, but by mine. My grace has already accomplished the Great Exchange, now, get out of the way, Paul, and let me live through you.” Paul responds, saying, “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in
insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor.12:9 and 10). Paul was strong because it was Christ’s strength coming through him. Wow, that is Exchanged Living!

The difference between the way the average Christian lives and those who live the Exchanged Life is similar to the difference between riding a bicycle versus a motorcycle. We can have the fanciest bike, all cleaned and polished, yet in order to go anywhere we have to provide the pedal power. It is easy to ride down hill because we can coast and just follow the road. Likewise, coasting downhill spiritually, following the well-paved way of the world is not a good way to go. When we do not “put on Christ” we are always limited by our own strength, most especially when we are faced with hills and the road gets tough.

On the other hand, when we “put on Christ,” which is exchanged living, it is like riding a motorcycle. We control the throttle and rely on Christ to be the power source. Initially, we start out only tapping into a small portion of the engine, but as we gain experience we become more confident in the ability of the motorcycle. The steepest of hills are no problem for this spiritual power plant. It is our responsibility to follow “the Road,” staying in our lane and avoiding the hazards on the shoulders. As advantageous as it is to ride the motorcycle and not the bicycle, and live the Exchanged Life, the choice is always ours.

**Communion keeps us reminded of the “Exchanged Life”**

On the night of Jesus’ arrest he established a memorial to remind us of his sacrifice and all that it accomplished.

Matthew 26:26-28

(26) While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

(27) Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. (28) This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

The bread is symbolic of Jesus’ broken body and the cup of wine symbolizes the shedding of his blood. Earlier in his ministry Jesus challenged his followers, telling them that any one who truly wanted to follow him had to “eat his body and drink his blood” (John 6:53 and 54). Communion is a sacred meal symbolizing the exchange of his life for ours, but in this memorial we are also acknowledging that our life is now his. There is a common saying, “You are what you eat,” and this is certainly very true when it comes to eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ. When we participate in the communion service we are in effect saying, “Jesus, your body and blood for mine, and mine for yours.” This is an aspect to the memorial he established that few seem to comprehend.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul warns them not to take this memorial too lightly. Eating it in an unworthy manner means the person is “sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 11:27-29

(27) Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

(28) A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

(29) For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks without recognizing the Lord himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

We are to examine our hearts and consciences so we remind ourselves of the Great Exchange that occurred when Jesus sacrificed his body and blood, dying in our place. The question we should ask is, “How am I living in response to his sacrifice?”

God’s desire is that we respond to His great gift of mercy and grace by living “…up to what we have already attained” (Phil. 3:16). How absolutely amazing it would be if Christian men and women everywhere began to live the Exchanged Life!

**Notes:**

1. Jesus did not become “sin,” he became a “sin offering.” God’s system of sacrifices for sin is set forth in the Old Testament, and the Greek translation of the Old Testament done about 250 BC, known as the Septuagint, uses the Greek word hamartia (Strong’s #266) consistently for a sin offering, a meaning that is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21. A number of translations pick up on this, and David Stern’s Complete Jewish Bible does an especially good job: “God made this sinless man be a sin offering on our behalf, so that in union with him we might fully share in God’s righteousness.”


3. The New Birth refers to the moment a person receives the gift of holy spirit when he confesses Jesus as Lord and believes God raised him from the dead. (Romans 10:9 and 10).

4. The Christian Post, April 4, 2008, Study: *Christian Divorce Rate Identical to National Average.* “The Barna Group found in its latest study that born again Christians who are not evangelical were indistinguishable from the national average on the matter of divorce with 33 percent having married and divorced at least once. Among all born again Christians, which includes evangelicals, the divorce figure is 32 percent, which is statistically identical to the 33 percent figure among non-born again adults, the research group noted.”

5. Blazinggrace.org/cms/bg/pornstats, April 6, 2007; “70% of Christians admitted that 33% of adults, the research group noted.”

6. The “old man” is a term used in the King James Version of the Bible and refers to the sin nature in all mankind. See Romans 6:6, James 4:2, Ephesians 4:22, and Colossians 3:9.

7. Colossians 1:27.

8. A sentient being has a consciousness, its own will.

9. John 16:13-14. (13) But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (14) He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”

10. 1 Corinthians 2:8 “None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

11. Putting on the “new man” is also referred to as “putting on Christ” or “putting on the ‘armor of light.’” See Romans 13:12; Galatians 3:27, Ephesians 4:24 and 6:11, Colossians 3:10.
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The Exchanged Life

The “Great Exchange” is a phrase that describes the exchange that occurs in people’s lives when they become a Christian. Before our New Birth we were sinners in the eyes of God, without holy spirit, and without hope. However, in the instantaneous occurrence of the New Birth, the sinner undergoes a change, in fact, an exchange. Jesus takes the sinner’s sin, while the sinner gets Jesus’ righteousness. Also, Jesus takes on himself the penalty for the sinner’s sin, which is death (something that he already experienced), while the sinner gets the reward for a sinless life, which is everlasting life.

In the Great Exchange, the sinner also receives the gift from God, holy spirit, so that God and Christ can work in him both to desire to do, and to perform, God’s good purposes (Phil. 2:13). Via the gift of holy spirit, Christians can give up their own desires and plans, and allow God’s purposes to be accomplished through them. They can also give up their fleshly weaknesses and allow the power of God to do mighty works through them. Thus, like the Apostle Paul, we can be “striving with His strength that works powerfully in [us]” (Col. 1:29 HCSB). Some parts of the “exchanged life” are automatic with salvation: being righteous in God’s eyes, getting the guarantee of everlasting life, and receiving holy spirit. Therefore, the difficult part of the exchanged life is letting go of our lives to fully embrace the life God wants for us. The life God desires for us to live is always a sacrificial life in which we become like Christ, living for others. Even though this is the path to fulfillment and power, we often cannot seem to grasp that fact, and then we cling to our own plans and desires. Sometimes we epitomize the poem, “Broken Toys.”

Broken Toys
As children bring their broken toys, with tears, for me to mend
I brought my broken dreams to God because He was my friend.
But then, instead of leaving Him in peace to work alone
I hung around and tried to help…with ways that were my own.
At last I snatched them back and cried, “How can You be so slow?”

We do need to let go of any fleshly ways that are evident in our lives, and trust God’s plan for us. Often the first step in doing that and really walking out in the power of the Exchanged Life is seeing it in the Word of God—that God really does say we are in union with Christ and have the ability and right to use his power.

Literal Translations can be Problematic
There are times when translating the Bible literally or “word for word,” is not helpful. For example, the Hebrew language does not have the present tense of the verb “to be” (“is”), and the Greek language omits it much of the time. However, imagine the trouble most of us would have if our Bibles were “literal” and omitted “is” or “are” in sentences just because it is not in the Hebrew or Greek. Many people would become confused, or certainly find the Bible hard to read. Many other examples of how translating literally can cause confusion could be given, but the point should be clear enough.

One of the rules we allow to guide the translation of the
Revised English Version is that if something was clear to those people reading the Hebrew or Greek text, then we should translate it in a way that makes it clear to us too. For example, when Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus is recorded as saying, “su legeis” (“You are saying it.” Matt. 27:11). In English, this is an ambiguous phrase, often meaning, “That is what you say, but not necessarily what I say.” However, in Greek it is a strong affirmative. Jesus was not playing games with Pilate—he was giving him a chance to believe and get saved. So when Pilate asked if he were the king of the Jews, Jesus answered, “Yes” (Goodspeed Translation; the REV, which uses italics to indicate words added for clarity, has, “Yes, it is as you say”).

### We are in Union with Christ

Our identity with Christ, and our union with him, often gets expressed by the phrase, “in Christ” or “into Christ.” The problem with those phrases is that we can read them without being at all sure what they mean. Consider the following verses:

**Romans 6:3**
Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

**Galatians 3:27**
for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

**Ephesians 4:15**
Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

What does it mean to be baptized, “into Christ,” and what does it mean to grow up, “into him?” By the time the New Testament was written, the Greek words en (in) and eis (to, towards) often meant the same thing, and expressed not a physical position, but a relationship. Thus, for example, R. C. H. Lenski writes:

It is the task of the grammars to tell the story as to how the Koine eis has expanded and invaded the territory of en [in] so that it reached even the static verbs, even those of being, letting us have the construction einai and on eis, this invasion being completed in modern Greek, en there being swallowed up entirely by eis. All the old grammars and all the old exegesis [based on much older Greek material, such as Homer’s works] are superseded by the immense volume of new information now at hand in the papyri, etc. We now see how wrong it was in scores of instances in the New Testament to interpret eis as “into,” and how only sheer ignorance forced the idea of motion into the preposition. Here in verse 3, 4, where it is found three times, as in Matt. 28:19, eis denotes sphere (Robertson’s Grammar p. 592) and...
not motion. The grammars now call it static eis.7

In the context of Romans 6, eis describes relation, not a position or motion. However, the English word “into” usually describes motion and position, so when most versions say that we were baptized “into Christ,” the English reader is almost always confused by what the phrase means. The phrase eis Christon (“into Christ”) expresses a connection, a relationship, and the exact relationship is determined by the context. The book of Romans makes it clear that when a person is baptized, there is a union between the believer and Christ, an identity with Christ, that is established.8 That is why several versions, including the REV (Revised English Version), put the word “union” into the text.

Romans 6:3 (Williams)9
Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into union with Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

Lenski translates it, “as many as were baptized in connection with Christ Jesus were baptized in connection with his death.” While “in connection with” is good, it is perhaps not as clear as it could be. When Christians are “in Christ,” there is more than just a connection, there is a union or spiritual identity. Each Christian has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20), died with Christ (Rom. 6:8), buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4), and raised with Christ (Eph. 2:6). Thus, although there certainly is a “connection” with Christ, the word “union” seems much more appropriate and clear. Romans 6:5 continues the close-knit relationship between us and Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:5
If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

The NIV above, and many other versions that use the word “united,” do so as a translation of the Greek word sumphutos (Strong’s #4854 σύμφυτος). This “united” is an amplification of the union expressed in the phrase “into union with Christ” in verse three. Sumphutos literally means “planted together,” and is another example of how translating in a strictly literal manner, without taking into account how a word was used in the culture, can be more confusing than helpful. After all, what would it mean to be “planted together” with Christ? The word sumphutos was used when two things grew together and became intertwined. Thus English versions translate it as “united with him” (ESV, NASB, NIV) “joined with him” (HCSB); “identifed with him” (Darby); “incorporate with him” (NEB); and “become one with him” (Cassirer). Kenneth Wuest describes the meaning of the word sumphutos:

It speaks of a living, vital union of two individuals growing up together. The word could be used of the Siamese twins whose bodies were connected at one point, and whose blood stream flowed through the two physical bodies as it does normally through one.10

Wuest’s example shows how closely the Bible portrays our lives being intertwined with Jesus’ life. Also part of the Greek text of the verse is the word homoioma (Strong’s #3667 ἴσον), which many versions translate as “likeness” or “like his.” Robert Thayer (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon), referencing this very verse, says, that homoioma, “amounts almost to equality of identity.” So we see that buried in the grammar and vocabulary of Romans 6:5 is our identity with Christ. No wonder so much of what we have as Christians we have “in him” (“in union with him”), not alone or “on our own.” Due to our union with him we have “every spiritual blessing” (Eph. 1:3), “glorious grace” (Eph. 1:6), “redemption” (Eph. 1:7), our being sealed with holy spirit (Eph. 1:13), our being raised to life and our promise of being seated in heaven (Eph. 2:6), God’s kindness (Eph. 2:7), and being part of the living temple of God (Eph. 2:21).

Legates for Christ

Our union with Christ includes the honor, privilege, and ability to act in his stead. So far in this article we have seen some examples where we must expand the English translation to bring the meaning of the Greek text into English. There are times that it is difficult to do so, simply because it would make the text unwieldy. 2 Corinthians 5:20 is such an example.

2 Corinthians 5:20
We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

The Greek word translated “ambassadors” is presbeueto (Strong’s #4243, πρεσβεύεω), and it was used in the Greek language to refer to three different kinds of people: an “elder,” an “ambassador,” and a “legate.” Whenever we come across a Hebrew or Greek word that has more than one meaning, we must decide which of them is the correct or appropriate meaning in the verse. In this case, we can do that by “trying
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Theme: TBA

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out” the meanings of presbeuō. Reading “elder” in this context does not make good sense, and thus “elder” is not the meaning here. Reading “ambassador” in this context makes sense, because we have the ministry and message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18 and 19). As ambassadors whose citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), we are in a foreign country here on earth, spreading good will and trying to win support for our king and country. But what about “legate”? We will see that makes sense also.

Communication in the Roman empire was slow. In our modern times, we often become impatient when someone does not e-mail us back the same day. In the Roman world, if a war broke out the Emperor may not even hear about it for weeks, and then not be able to decide what to do simply because no matter what information he had and how many daily messengers arrived, their “news” was always old. Worse, when the Emperor’s orders actually arrived at the trouble spot, well, the situation was likely totally different or the trouble even over.

One way the Greco-Roman rulers dealt with the problem was through the office of the legate, a person with the authority to represent the ruler; a person delegated and empowered to act as the king himself in any given situation. About presbeutēs Barnett writes: “Such delegates—Jewish or Greco-Roman—came with the authority of the sender, in his place, to secure his interests,” and they were referred to as legates.11 Kittel’s Theological Dictionary adds, “In the Roman period presbeutēs is the Greek equivalent of [the Latin] legatus...It is commonly used for the imperial legates.”12 Spicq adds, “…a legate is a noteworthy personage, at the top of the military hierarchy, and presbeuon and presbeutes are technical terms for imperial legates in the Greek Orient.”13 “Legate” is an important point being made in 2 Corinthians 5:20. While it is true that we are ambassadors for Christ, we are also his legates—his personal presence on earth. As we walk by the spirit, in a very real sense we are Christ in the situation. We see this played out over and over again in the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts. One notable example in Acts occurred when Peter was traveling around Israel teaching, and a woman named Tabitha who lived in Joppa, the old seaport city of Israel, died. The disciples found out that Peter was in a nearby city and called for him. Notice how Peter acts in the presence of Christ when raising the dead. He assessed the situation, and then acted.

**Acts 9:40**

Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up.

First, Peter prayed about what to do. But once he received revelation guidance from God or Jesus about what to do concerning Tabitha, it is important to note what he did not do: he did not pray for God to raise Tabitha. He did not say anything such as: “Dear God, here lies Tabitha. Please raise her from the dead. Please put life back into her.” No, Peter did not pray like that. Rather, he acted like Jesus acted. When Jesus was in the presence of a dead girl, he did not ask God to raise the girl, he said, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!” (Mark 5:41). In fact, if we study Jesus Christ’s healings and miracles, there is not one single time Jesus asked God to do the healing. It was God’s power that did the work, certainly, but Jesus knew he was God’s representative on earth, so he healed a leper, saying, “Be clean” (Matt. 8:3). He healed a cripple, saying, “Stretch out your hand” (Matt. 12:13). He did look up into heaven before he fed the five thousand, but it was to give thanks (Luke 9:16), not to ask God to do the miracle, he broke the loaves and did the miracle as God’s representative. He cast demons out of people by commanding them to leave, as we see in Luke: “Come out of him” (Luke 4:35). Peter knew that he was the legate of Christ, the personal presence of Christ, and he healed as Jesus did.

Paul healed the same way that Jesus and Peter did. First, it is imperative that we receive revelation about what to do. The power for the miracle or healing always comes from God, but we must bring God’s power to bear in the situation by commanding it in faith.14 Paul healed a cripple by saying, “Stand up on your feet!” (Acts 14:10). He cast...
out a demon, saying, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” (Acts 16:18). Actually, there is a lot in that verse. Although Paul did not always use the name of Christ out loud when he did healings and miracles, using it shows he understood that the power and authority were coming from Christ, but he was the one who must command the miracle. There is no record in Acts of anyone being healed

“A very real part of the exchanged life is that Christians are legates of Christ—the personal presence of Christ on earth. However, we have a decision to make.

where the one doing the healing prayed for God to do it. In every specific case, the individual did the healing or miracle, but was clearly doing so by the power of God, which is why God always gets the glory.

A very real part of the exchanged life is that Christians are legates of Christ—the personal presence of Christ on earth. However, we have a decision to make. Just as a Roman legate could go to the hippodrome and sit and eat olives and watch the horse races all day long instead of going out and representing the Emperor, so Christians can act in ways that hang on to the flesh and not walk in the power of Christ. Walking in the fullness of the Exchanged Life does not just happen; it is a purposeful decision. We must realize the power we have, and then go into the world and walk it out in faith.

So should 2 Corinthians 5:20 read “legates” instead of “ambassadors?” “Ambassadors” fits the context so well that it seems best to leave it as the reading in the text and have the reading “legate” in the margin as an additional meaning.

“Christ in you, the hope of glory”

We have seen that the union we have with Christ and the fact that we exchanged our fleshly weakness for his spiritual power is expressed in different ways in the Word of God. Another one of those ways is in Colossians. Colossians 1:26 speaks of “the Sacred Secret, which has been hidden...but now has been revealed” (REV). To more clearly understand what God is speaking of, we must understand that “the Sacred Secret is an Administration (or “Dispensation”) of God that takes place between the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:17). God poured out special grace in the Administration of the Sacred Secret, and has given Christians power and glory that people before the Church Age simply did not have. But how does God communicate that fact to us? Well, He could have written a couple of large paragraphs in which He described everything that we have in Christ. But God did it another way; He simply said “Christ” was in us. Of course the man Jesus Christ is not in us, but God is using the figure of speech hypocatastasis to import the meaning of all that Christ is, all his characteristics, are now in us.

Colossians 1:27 (REV)

God wanted to make known to them what is the riches of the glory of this sacred secret among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The phrase “Christ in us” expresses the union we have with him, and also the power that we have as Christians. Christ is in us, so now all we have to do is let the Christ in us live in what we do. Before we leave the phrase, “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” it is important to give proper credit to the “glory.” God could have rightly said, “Christ in you, the power of God,” or “Christ in you, the intimate relationship with God,” but He did not. The reality is that no matter how hard we try to be like Christ and live like Christ did, the world will still be worldly. Like Christ, we can do a lot of good, but also like Christ, we will suffer and die. Therefore, one thing we must always keep our eyes on in order to keep our energy up is the hope of glory, and our union with Christ guarantees us that glory. One day we will have a body like his and live in his glorious kingdom.

Conclusion

Christians have power and glory in a way that was not available before the Church started on the Day of Pentecost. Christians are not just “followers of Christ.” We are in union with Christ, we have an identity with him. We exchanged our sinfulness and weakness for his strength and power. Now, as individual members of his Body, as people with Christ in us, as his legates, let us renew our efforts to bring Christ into the world through us. The world desperately needs Christ, and he can come to it as we let his love and power move in us.

Notes:

1. The Bible says the sinner is “without hope” because the future of the unsaved sinner is annihilation. For more on the everlasting destruction of the sinner, see the REV commentary on Revelation 20:10, available at STFonline.org/rev

2. When a person gets “born again,” at that moment he receives, and is sealed with, God’s gift of holy spirit (Eph.1:13). This spirit is the primary way that God and Christ then communicate with, and work through, the Christian. Philippians 2:13 (REV) says, “for it is God who is working in you both to want to do, and to do, his good pleasure.”

3. The HCSB is the Holman Christian Standard Bible, a new version that is gaining a lot of popularity today because of its easy reading style but fidelity to the text, and its occasional use of “Yahweh” as the proper name of God. Many versions use “struggle” instead of “strive” (or an equivalent word), which is fine if struggle is understood correctly, that we
struggle against sin and evil, and not against God who is trying to work through us.

4. The author is uncertain. A search of the Internet revealed at least three sources that were given credit for the poem, Ben Hildner, Robert Burdette, and Author Unknown.

5. The Revised English Version (REV) is the version of the Bible that Spirit & Truth Fellowship is developing. We are in our eleventh year of the translation project, which is posted on the internet at STFOnline.org/rev and is updated every 90 days.

6. One of the interesting questions of the Bible is, “In what language did Jesus and Pilate converse?” Jesus would have almost certainly been raised speaking Aramaic, but would have learned Hebrew to read Scripture and converse with religious leaders (there is even evidence that Hebrew was spoken quite commonly in New Testament times—John 19:20 says the sign over Jesus’ head was in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. Although some scholars say the sign was in Aramaic, the text reads “Hebrew,” and there is a word that means Aramaic, but it is not used in the sign). Also, Jesus was raised only a few miles from Sephoris, the capital city of the Galilee, where Greek and Latin were spoken and where Joseph and his sons would have gotten lots of work. Also, to speak with the large numbers of Greek speaking Jews or people of the Decapolis or near Tyre and Sidon, Jesus would have almost certainly had to speak Greek. Thus, Jesus was almost certainly trilingual, and likely quatra-lingual, picking up Latin in his childhood. For his part, Pilate would have spoken Latin and Greek, and as the governor of Judea, likely picked up some Aramaic and even some Hebrew as well.

7. R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, MN, reprint 1961), p. 391. “Koine” was the Greek commonly spoken at the time of Christ. Robertson’s Grammar that Lenski refers to is, A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research (Hodder and Stoughton, New York, 1923). It is very common to read a Greek grammar book, or even some study Bibles such as the Companion Bible by E. W. Bullinger, and see a chart of Greek prepositions, where en means “in,” els means “to,” pros means “toward,” apo means “away from,” etc. While perhaps giving beginners a place to start, these charts can cause serious problems if used in translation, simply because there are so many exceptions, and prepositions have so many different meanings. Imagine such a chart in English where “up” meant “up” (an arrow pointing up). That works great if you are sending a rocket into space, but what about, “Don’t tear it up,” “Move up a grade,” “Cheer up,” “Your time is up,” “Divide up the money,” “Drive up to the next window,” “Speak up,” “Go up river,” “Bring up the subject tomorrow” and “the people are up in arms.” To translate correctly, we must consider the full range of the meaning of a word, something native speakers do instinctively.

8. In the context we are dealing with in Romans, “baptism” refers to baptism in holy spirit, which occurs simultaneously with being saved; born again. Most Christians readily admit that there are church-goers who have been water baptized but have never given their hearts to Christ and gotten saved. Therefore it should be clear that being baptized in water does not give us union with Christ, but baptism in holy spirit and thus being filled and sealed with it always means we have a union with Jesus Christ.


12. Bromiley, Geoffrey, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapid, MI, 1968), Vol. 6, p. 681. This ten-volume theological dictionary is often referred to as “Kittel’s Theological Dictionary.” Where the ellipsis appears in the quotation above, there are a number of references to ancient works to substantiate the point.


14. 1 Corinthians 12:6 (REV) shows that the power, or energy to do the work, comes from God: “And there are different kinds of energizings, yet it is the same God who energizes all of them in all people.”


16. There are three main figures of speech of comparison: simile (which uses “like” or “as”), metaphor (which uses “is” or “are”), and hypocatastasis (a comparison by implication). Simile usually carries the least emotion and impact, with hypocatastasis having the most. For example, if someone tricks us and we are mildly annoyed, we might say, “You are a snake!” However, if we are really angry we might just say, “Snake!” which is a hypocatastasis, the comparison is implied, not stated. Genesis 3 simply says, “Now the serpent,” which is a hypocatastasis. The evil being in the Garden was Satan, who as well as being called a “serpent,” is called a “dragon” (Rev. 20:2). The gift of holy spirit, which brings the power, glory, and characteristics of Christ into us, is simply called “Christ” in us by the figure hypocatastasis. Further explanations of the three figures of comparison, with examples, can be found on TruthOrTradition.com, under the topic Figures of Speech, and the article on Hypocatastasis.

17. The Christians that experience the Rapture of the Church will not die, but be changed (1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:51).
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I'm trying not to panic, but all of the greatest songs from my high school years are now featured on the “classics” radio station. My first sign of aging was when “U Can't Touch This” went from a great dance mix to my children's fighting theme song from the back seat of the car. When I was pregnant with my third baby, my doctor wisely hid behind a chair as he informed me that I was now considered a “mature” mother. I'm not in Abraham's category, because his age description was as “one as good as dead.” What's happening to me? I'm pushing forty, and I'm entering yet another “stage” of my life.

The first challenging “stage” of life is toddlerhood. I'd like to believe that this phase is as difficult for the toddler as it is for the mother—I'll let you know as soon as my head stops spinning. When our good-natured Nate began to have temper tantrums, it took me a while to catch on to the fact that he had just turned two. He quickly mastered the various tantrums: The Boiling Lobster (flailing and screaming), The Mummy (rigor mortis), and The Jellyfish (limp body, refusing to budge). When you have children, you frequently keep your sanity by reminding yourself, “This is just a stage.” Whatever you have to tell yourself to get to sleep at night. Well-meaning visitors will watch your child swinging from the chandelier and advise, “Don’t worry; it’s just a stage.”

Do the stages ever really end? I have come to the conclusion that we never truly outgrow the “stages.” From toddlers to teens, from mid-lifers to seniors, everyone is in a stage. Each stage has its less-than-charming “side effects” that everyone will blame on the stage. At what point will we realize that until Jesus returns, no one will ever be perfect? Jesus is perfect, we are to strive to be like him, but if we expect perfection from ourselves and others, we will be greatly disappointed.

As I lie in bed at night and reflect on the events of the day, I often imagine the conversations about me that might be occurring in the heavenly realms.

Angel 1: Wow, look at her. She's still struggling with the same issues.
Angel 2: (rolling his eyes) I know. Yesterday she made the same mistake five times. When is she ever going to learn?
God: Don't worry; IT'S JUST A STAGE.
Angel 1 & Angel 2: (in unison) But she's forty…

When our children are frustrated by their mistakes, it's easy for me to comfort them. After all, the very young are expected to learn through continuous trial and error. I encourage them that “though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again” (Prov. 24:16). Once we reach adulthood, we put certain expectations on ourselves that can lead to self-condemnation.

Since I have always been a perfectionist, I like everything in my life to be meticulous. I am so organized that when I die, you can just three-hole punch me and put me in a binder. When the “roll is called up yonder,” I'll be there…in place alphabetically, of course. If I want to be a good example for our children, however, I need to model humility, which involves a healthy attitude towards both success and failure.

Some parents desperately try to prove that their children are “spiritual.” They unabashedly demonstrate how
Accepting forgiveness for sins is a stumbling block for many Christians. By his death, Jesus essentially tore up the “certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us” (Col. 2:14) for our sins.

1 John 1:8-10
(8) If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
(9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
(10) If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

Accepting forgiveness for sins is a stumbling block for many Christians.

Colossians 2:13-15 (REV)
(13) And you, being dead due to the transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, even you He made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,
(14) having wiped clean the handwritten document that was against us, which by means of its regulations was hostile to us, and He has taken it away, having nailed it to the cross.
(15) He stripped naked the rulers and the authorities, and He (through him), made a public spectacle of them, leading them as captives in a Triumph procession.

Our kids constantly bring me their books with torn pages and ask me to tape them. There are some books with pages that look like they’ve gone through the shredder, but my children still expect me to tape the pieces back together. They refuse to accept the fact that the paper is irreparable. Similarly, when we focus on our sins or the sins of others, we are attempting to tape those abolished decrees of our sins back together again. The triumph of Jesus erased our debt! He put our list of sins through the shredder! Imagine if our credit card, mortgage, and utility companies took all of our debt away for us as an act of love. Would we refuse to accept it? No, we would be dancing in the streets out of joy and thankfulness.

According to Psalm 103:12, the sacrifice of Jesus removed our transgressions “as far as the east is from the west.” I asked our daughter Grace how far she thought the east is from the west, just to see if a five year old could comprehend this concept of forgiveness. To my surprise, she pondered this question for quite a long time. She slowly paced around the house, trying to measure the distance with her feet. She looked out the east window and the west window. She furrowed her brow, thought long and hard, and then answered, “It’s
Self-condemnation will only sideline us. Condemning others will only hurt the team as a whole.

really, reeeally far.” She got it.

Even if we had a particularly bad stage of life, a time that brings shame to our hearts, those sins can also be repented of, confessed, and forgiven. It was hardly a mid-life crisis when Paul was consenting to the death of Christians. He considered himself the worst sinner of all time, but Jesus demonstrated his love, mercy, and grace through Paul’s life as an example to us. The blood of Jesus does not discriminate.

1 Timothy 1:15 and 16
(15) Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.
(16) But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

If we repent for our sins, confess them, and accept forgiveness, the Lord will give us the same love, mercy, and grace we need to move forward for him.

He needs us to get our act together and get back in the game for him!

Philippians 3:12-16
(12) Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.
(13) Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,
(14) I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
(15) All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.
(16) Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Many children are traumatized by the process of “picking teams” in gym class. The coach will select two captains, who then decide which classmates are “team-worthy.” Everyone knows that the most capable students are picked first, so the last ones standing feel humiliated and unwanted. When we get back in the game for Jesus, he needs us to reach out to include others on our team. Those who are living in condemnation need someone loving to say, “I don’t care if you’ve never scored a goal. You can play on the winning team.”

Self-condemnation will only sideline us. Condemning others will only hurt the team as a whole. Instead, we should labor with all diligence in love to make whatever “stage” of life we are in extraordinary. Young, old, and in between, we are all forgiven and loved.

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- One Body, Members in Particular
- Love: The More Excellent Way
O ur family profile (Torrey/Calderon) is dynamic and unique—diversity at its best that includes East meets West (geographically), two languages (English and Spanish), other distinct cultural attributes, and united in love by our Heavenly Father and Creator, God! We (Paul and Vicky) met and were married in Texas, where we began partnering with the notion of “truth vs. tradition.” Having been involved with many Christian ministries, Spirit and Truth has remained the longest relationship yet, which is a direct result of the bi-annual events that have served our teenage daughters.

Back in the early 1990’s, many of our friends and family told us about new and refreshing biblical teachings and experiences from Christian Educational Services (CES). In the years following, we would attend meetings in town and were blessed with the quality of the biblical teachings, which led us to purchase cassette tapes, especially some of the most popular and noteworthy teachings that were available. We found the teachings to be a valuable supplement for use at our independent home fellowship, consisting of a small group of Christians and our three daughters (toddler ages). After some time, we decided to be spiritual partners to receive the bi-monthly teachings that were taught by various teachers, usually from ministry events or pre-recorded by the CES Staff.

Although our involvement was minimal, we were blessed to be partners and never felt pressured to do more than what we were doing. We have always appreciated that our partnership exuded a mutual respect and an understanding that “God is our sufficiency,” not people (2 Cor. 3:5).

In 1996, we moved out West to California and began attending a non-denominational Christian church that had members who were also affiliated with CES. It was totally incidental, leading us into a deeper relationship with Christians from CES and to a greater realization that God’s guidance was at work in our lives. In 2001, it was time to experience the East coast and we relocated to the Orlando area in Florida. As our girls became teenagers, we knew it was time to send them to “Teens & Twenties Camp,” especially because our attempts to find a similar Christian-fellowship scenario, as we had experienced in the past, were nil. After witnessing the transformation of our two older daughters that summer (2005), and how their love for God kindled an awareness of spiritual matters, we were convinced that we wanted to share that time with them, while giving of our talents and labor at the camp. Subsequently, we began to volunteer at the “Live Out Loud” conferences.

Life has changed since the Teen Camps and “Live Out Loud” conferences. Two high points of the year, but life in between had been difficult because we had not established home fellowships since living in Texas, until over a year ago when we found another Christian family to fellowship with our family. We are truly blessed with our “teens-to-twenty” daughters who love and know God. Annelisa is twenty years old, a Music-Education student at Florida Southern College, and travels home on weekends to participate. Norma, our youngest, is a senior in high school. Our Becky is an Informatics student at Indiana University in Bloomington where she is very blessed to fellowship with John and Jenivee Schoenheit.

As important as it is, our employment as high school teachers is extremely stressful and sometimes it may seem justifiable to decide to pass on an opportunity to lead a home fellowship, as we have done in the past. However, now that we have committed to our weekly fellowships, much of the stress has been replaced by joy and fulfillment. Partnering financially with “Spirit & Truth Fellowship International” (STF) throughout the years has allowed us to maintain a spiritual relationship and strong kinship that continues to benefit our lives in many ways. In addition to the blessings in our lives, we are thankful to God for STF’s commitment to making the truth freely accessible and for the reality that we can actually be a part of it. As partners with STF, we can claim responsibility for reaching people ubiquitously, because now the Internet extends our reach, yes, even unto the “uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

We love all our brothers and sisters in Christ and always keep an “open heart” to accept others regardless of our differences culturally, politically, racially, etc. We are always blessed to serve God and His people as best as we can.

God bless you and we pray that others will benefit as we have as partners with STF.

Lovingly,
Paul, Vicky, Annelisa, Becky & Norma

PARTNER with Spirit & Truth Fellowship International
Sign up online at STFonline.org/partnership or call 888.255.6189 M-F 9 to 5 (ET).
Exchange Your Short Life!
by John Schoenheit

A good practice in business is that an exchange should be “fair” to both parties. The merchant gets a fair price, and the buyer gets a good product, thus making a “fair deal.” However, there are times in business when things do not go that way.

If a merchant misrepresents a product and overprices it, he is swindling the buyer. But if the merchant knowingly offers a product for only a fraction of what it is worth—well, it’s a great deal for the buyer, and usually the merchant is getting something in return like free advertising, community goodwill, or reduced excess inventory. Sometimes in business and in society “unfair exchanges” are made because of love, and it is because of His love for us that God has offered us what could seem like an unfair exchange.

We humans have a very short and very much marred life, and frankly, to the world, it is not worth much (if you do not believe that, try buying even a five million dollar life insurance policy on yourself. Usually no company will sell it to you). But God loves us more than we can imagine, and He is willing to take our short life and exchange it for an everlasting one. The exchange works like this: we give Him our life by making His Son our Lord, and He gives us life that lasts forever. What a deal!

Here is exactly what to do to make the exchange:

**Romans 10:9**
That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved [and live forever].

This offer is only good while you are alive. Don’t risk unexpected death and miss this deal. You want to live forever, so act today! ♦

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**Video: Becoming a Christian**

Watch a quick 10-minute video on how and why to get saved. This video goes in-depth to answer common questions. [TruthOrTradition.com/becoming](http://TruthOrTradition.com/becoming)

Modern brain science is confirming what God said nearly 2,000 years ago, which is not surprising I guess, since God was the one who designed our brains. Whole books have been written about how neuroscience and the Bible go together like best friends on a prom date, but today I just want to share one thing: how we are literally transformed when we renew our minds.

Romans 12:2a
Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

What does it mean to “renew” one’s mind? How do I do that? What does it look like? This is a time when studying the Greek word gives us better understanding: it comes from a compound word made up of ana (“up”) and kainos (“new”). Okay, so you say, what does it mean to “up-new” my mind? Well, we have to remember that there are two different words for “new” in ancient Greek, one for describing something new in time (neos) and another for describing something new in quality (kainos). To see the difference, imagine a friend of yours got a new car. You might say, “your car is brand new,” by which you mean it’s fresh off the assembly line. That would be neos. But then imagine instead your friend restored a classic, 1960’s car to mint condition; in that case, when you say, “It looks brand new,” you mean it has been brought to a new and better quality. This is kainos, which is the word used here in Romans 12:2. In other words, you need to restore and clean up your thoughts to a brand new higher quality. God is telling us that taking our thoughts up to a new and better quality can change us. We become changed by changing the way we think.

This is exactly what neuroscience is verifying. For instance, Dr. Jeffery Schwartz, a Christian researcher at UCLA, does brain imaging scans of patients who suffer from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) anxieties when he teaches. He has scores of before-and-after shots of how the brain physically rewires itself and becomes healed from OCD simply by teaching his patients how to change the way they think. There is just as much healing, or more, in patients who only take a placebo. I’m not suggesting that every mental illness is just “all in your head,” or that there’s no place for medicine, but I am saying that science is showing that we can become transformed—even at brain-chemistry level—by renewing our minds.

Is your brain offering you evil thoughts? Lusts? Doubts? Cursing? Unkind responses? The good news is that this transformation works for all of these types of things. You have the power to change, because God has given you the power to change your thoughts. How are you transformed? You are transformed by the renewing of your mind. It’s precisely the renewing of the mind that does the transformation. By renewing your mind, you will physically rewire your brain, which as a part of your flesh is sending you the message to sin (Eph. 2:3).

Let’s see an example. Back in my early junior high years I went through a time (I’m ashamed to say) of stealing things at the local mall. I stole candy, I stole books, I even stole purple hair dye. Then I became convicted that...
my behavior was sinful, and also just
downright wrong and hurtful to those
poor business owners. So I wanted to
stop. But I found it hard to stop. When I
would go to the mall I would hear this
plaguing whisper in my thoughts, you
could get that for free, you know—just
put it in your pocket. I wanted to be
transformed from a thief to a giving
person, but in order to change I
needed to win the battle in my mind.
I needed my brain to work for
me and
not
against
me, the way it was when it
was suggesting evil thoughts. Scripture
says, “each person is tempted when he
is lured and enticed by his own desire”
(James 1:14 ESV).

To break free and change I had to
“take every thought captive to the
obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5b NAU).
When I was in a store and the thought
came up, “This would be so easy to
steal,” I had to replace it with a higher
quality thought. I would say, “No, evil
thought, I will not choose to think
about stealing, which would be to sin
against my Lord! Instead I choose to
think about how I want to be a blessing
to others.” So the first step is to label
the intrusive thought as a lie. Then take
the thought captive to the obedience
of Christ. And lastly, you can’t just try
to not think about it—this is like when
someone says, “Don’t think about a
purple elephant,” you can’t help but
think about it. Instead of emptying your
head of the intrusive thought, you have
to fill your head with another good
thought so that there’s no room left for
the negative one. In other words, you
have to do what scripture says to do:
“think about these things.”

Philippians 4:8 ESV
Finally, brothers, whatever is true,
whatever is honorable, whatever is
just, whatever is pure, whatever is
lovely, whatever is commendable,
if there is any excellence, if there
is anything worthy of praise, think
about these things.

The process I have just described is
what the renewing of our minds looks
like. The cool news is that by doing
this we are physically changed; this
process rewire the brain so that it
stops sending that fleshly desire which
leads to temptation. The more we resist
evil, the easier the battle becomes. We
could even see the transformation if we
took pictures of the brain. Is that cool,
or what? 😊
The ability to communicate with words is one thing that sets mankind apart from all other creatures. God is the Author of language, and no one has ever used language as precisely as God does in the Bible, including His use of figures of speech, of which there are more than 200 varieties in Scripture.¹

When most people say, “a figure of speech,” they are speaking in general terms of something that is not true to fact. However, genuine “figures of speech” are legitimate grammatical and lexical forms that add emphasis and feeling to what we say and write. In the Bible, God uses figures of speech to emphasize things that He wants us to see as important. Many people who read the Bible never think to ask themselves, “How do we know what God wants emphasized in His Word?” God uses figures of speech to put emphasis where He wants emphasis, so it is important that we recognize and properly interpret the figures of speech in the Bible. Knowing the figures of speech God uses in the Bible helps us to understand the true meaning of Scripture and enables us to more fully enjoy its richness.

The figure of speech we are going to study in this issue of The Sower is Acrostichion, or, in English, Acrostic. The Greek word Acrostichion comes from akros (“the extremity;” thus the beginning or end), and stichos (a row), and thus an Acrostichion is when letters are used at the beginning or end of a number of lines. The letters can be the letters of the alphabet, or can spell a word or phrase. By John W. Schoenheit

Psalm 111 is a perfect acrostic in Hebrew. The Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters, and Psalm 111 has 22 lines in the Hebrew text, and each of them begins with the next successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Psalm 112 is also a perfect acrostic in Hebrew. It is no coincidence that Psalm 111 and 112 are placed together. Psalm 111 focuses on Yahweh, giving Him praise and honor, while Psalm 112 focuses on the person who fears Yahweh and how he is blessed.

Psalm 119 is the most famous acrostic Psalm in the Bible. It is well known for being the longest Psalm in the Bible, but it is not as well known that it is acrostic. There are 176 verses in Psalm 119, which is 22 (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet) times 8. Each stanza of eight verses begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, beginning with aleph (the first letter) and ending with tau (the last letter).

Proverbs 31:10-31, the verses that extol the virtuous woman, are acrostic.
There are more acrostics in the Bible, and not every one of them is “perfect,” having all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order, and furthermore, not all of them reproduce the alphabet. Psalms 9 and 10 are two halves of an acrostic, completing one thought, but the acrostic is not “perfect” as is the acrostic in Psalm 111, for example. Actually, Psalms 9 and 10 are just one psalm in both the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament made about 250 BC, and in the Latin Vulgate version. In the Hebrew text, Psalm 9 starts with aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and Psalm 10 starts with lamed (pronounced “laam’-ed”), the twelfth letter, the letter that starts the second half of the Hebrew alphabet. E. W. Bullinger points out in his book, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, that Psalms 9 and 10, more than just being about sinful people in general, describe the Antichrist, the man of sin, and the times in which he lives (which is actually easier to see in Hebrew than in English). It is likely that Bullinger correctly surmises that the acrostic is imperfect and broken on purpose, reflecting the imperfect and broken condition of the world when the Antichrist rules the earth and the imperfect nature of the Antichrist himself.

When figures of speech such as Acrostic occur in the Bible, English readers must rely on marginal notes and sometimes a good study Bible to reveal that fact, because what can be easily seen in Hebrew or Greek cannot usually be reproduced as accurately in English. 

Notes:
I Don’t Feel Like It!

BY DAN GALLAGHER

Maybe it’s true for you like it is for me, that many of the things in life that I know I should do just don’t do because I don’t feel like it. Although there are numerous things in my life that I could use as an example, food and exercise is something that most people can relate to. In my case, I frequently eat more of the foods I shouldn’t eat, and less of the things I should. I have disciplined myself to exercise on a regular basis, but I still find myself too often not really “feeling like doing it.” Of course I like the results, but sometimes the yummy chocolate chip cookie wins the wrestling contest in my mind between tantalizing my taste buds or my desire for a smaller belt size.

The fact is that most people don’t do things that they don’t feel like doing. Like me, many people can be downright stubborn about not doing something they don’t want to do. I was recently confronted in a showdown of stubbornness when I told my five year old that it was bath time, to which he promptly replied, “but I don’t feeeeeeel like it.” I would think that by now he would know that a pintsize person weighing only fifty pounds and three feet high is no match for an adult man pushing 215 pounds and six feet high. In spite of his feeble whimpers he quickly found himself sitting waist high in a tub of warm water. His tears soon turned to joyful splashes as he forgot all about how much he didn’t “feel” like taking a bath.

Amazingly, like my child, time and time again we don’t do what God tells us to do, even though we know it’s best, just because we too “don’t feel like it.”

Every parent knows that children must be directed and guided. If the decision on what they eat was left up to them, many would choose a diet of candy, cookies, or cake, because that is what they “feel” like eating. Thank goodness parents, understanding that a diet like that would soon lead to malnutrition and sickness, can insist on a balanced dietary regimen of meat, vegetables and everything else required for their growing bodies. God, like a good parent, tells us what to do because He knows it is what is best for us. Our flesh and sin nature deceive us into thinking that following God’s commands constrains our ability to enjoy ourselves. God is never trying to limit us, but to set us free. Putting off the appetites of the flesh always leads to freedom. Giving in to our sin-driven desires is like having little foxes sneak into our vineyards and steal away the good fruit on our vines. We have the freedom to make choices, but the choices we make should lead to freedom. When we do, our hearts are set free.

Psalm 119:32
I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.

As we mature in Christ we realize that our lives are no longer our own. We were bought at a great price and now we have an obligation to live for him by letting him live through us. This requires much discipline, but as I heard a wise person once say, “Discipline is what frees me from the tyranny of my flesh.” We are...
no longer to be ruled by our emotions, feelings, or desires. As we grow in Christ we learn that what is important is not what we “feel” or “want,” but what He wants. True freedom is realized when we live in obedience, despite our feelings.

Living the exchanged life means that our priorities become God’s priorities. It is a life that is filled with doing what Jesus “wants,” not what I want. Jesus didn’t “feel” like being tortured for more than forty hours. Nor did He “feel” like enduring the pain of the cross, but He did it because that is what God asked Him to do. The agony he suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane makes this pretty clear. Like Christ, whenever we are confronted with doing something that we know God wants us to do, yet we do not feel like it, the refrain of the exchanged heart is, “Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matt. 26: 39).

In many ways living in the power of God is as simple as making the choice to let Christ live through you. What that means is that you will do what He wants you to do, when He wants you to do it, and how he wants it done. We all have plenty of practice living for ourselves and pursuing the pleasures of the flesh, but living the exchanged life requires us to discipline ourselves to choose light over darkness, good over evil, and truth instead of error. We can be honest with God and tell Him when we don’t “want” to do something, but still we must say, “I will.”

Meeting together is a great place to practice being “willing.” Let’s face it, coming home from a hard day’s work and then having to head out for an evening meeting is something that we sometimes don’t “feel” like doing. Or if you host a fellowship, getting the home picked up and ready, preparing for a house full of people and putting songs or a teaching together is not necessarily something that you may feel like doing. But when we live the exchanged life we are “willing” to do whatever it takes to love and serve His people. Every time we feel like doing the wrong thing, but choose to do the right thing, we grow spiritually.

God does not place emphasis on talents and gifts but on the willingness of the heart, a willingness to obey Him and do what He commands.

Exodus 35:5
From what you have, take an offering for the LORD. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the LORD an offering of gold, silver and bronze;

Judges 5:9
My heart is with Israel’s princes, with the willing volunteers among the people. Praise the LORD!

In our modern times people think that they know something because they have highlighted the verse in their Bible or hung it as an inspirational print on the wall. In the Hebrew culture a person was considered only as knowing something when they actually did it. From God’s perspective, knowing and doing are inseparable, and having a willing heart always precedes our doing. If our hearts are right we want to do what He wants and not what we want. This is the kind of person God seeks all over the earth to find, and He rejoices when He finds this type of heart in a person.

2 Chronicles 16:9
For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.

In our meetings we should learn to place the emphasis on “being willing, and doing.” We pray because God tells us to. We practice the manifestations of the holy spirit because God tells us to speak in tongues, to interpret, and to prophesy. We witness to others about Christ, give joyfully, and read God’s Word because He tells us to, even if we don’t “feel” like it. Don’t get upset with yourself if you don’t “feel” like doing something God asks you to do. Instead, whenever that happens just say, “God, I don’t feel like it…but I will!”
Dear Sower

Website Feedback
Hello and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ. I am new to your web site and a new Christian for about a month 1/2 now praise God! I just wanted to express my deepest gratitude for this WONDERFUL informative web site of yours.

I have learned more in a month from this web site than I have in all my years of being a Catholic. Nothing wrong with being a Catholic if that’s what brings you closer to our Lord that’s great. However, for me I found too many things that just didn’t gel with me spiritually.

I thank God that I have found this website. Not only does it explain many questions I have about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and being a Christian, you go straight to the Bible to substantiate it. That to me is a POWERFUL way to learn! Amen. The teachers are all AWESOME.

John S. is one of my favorite teachers; he’s so passionate like all the teachers and you can really see it in their teachings.

I go to this web site EVERY DAY! No seriously! I can’t stop learning more & more about the word of God. It is really amazing. Just wanted to let you know. Thank you so much and may God bless!

Sincerely, Kathie Wesley

Editor's Note:
Go to STFonline.org/getinvolved to see all our ministry resources. Much more is on its way!

Articles Online for Free
I am so thankful for your articles. I’ve shared them with friends and family. I’ve experienced much growth in my life because of your wonderful ministry. Thank you!

God bless you all,
Deb Stein
Beloit, WI

Editor’s Note:
To check out our latest articles, visit TruthOrTradition.com

YouTube Video Feedback
Hello, you have such a cool YouTube channel and by watching the videos I learn more and more and I really appreciate all the videos you make!

God bless you!
YouTube Subscriber

Editor's Note:
Check out all of our 10-minute YouTube videos at TruthOrTradition.com/youtube

More YouTube Feedback
What a wonderful channel, I am looking forward to watching more of your videos. What a message in “Work hard to be Holy.” Thank you for caring enough to get the message out. Oh how I yearn for less folly and more of God’s wisdom! May the LORD continue to bless you.

Agape, Mary
YouTube Subscriber

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Greatly Encouraged
Woo Hoo! I just bought “The Bible: You Can Believe It!” on my Kindle™. I’m so glad. When you speak to someone it is easier to show info on a Kindle than carrying all those books. You guys rock!

Marilyn Holzmann
Germany

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