“The Exchanged Life”

June 24, 2018

Ephesians 1:15-23

Please open your Bible with me to the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter five.

Here’s my beginning question. “How would you like to change your life?” And, before you answer this question, let me follow it with this one. “Would you believe me if I told you that God did not want to change your life? Instead, He wants to exchange it.” I’ve titled today’s sermon “The Exchanged Life.” Shall we pray?

Now, please find with me the last verse of this fifth chapter. Let’s see if Jesus says anything here about today’s topic. Matthew 5:48 *“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”*

This must might be the most difficult command ever spoken in a sermon. And haven’t you noticed that some-times, some of the things Jesus says appear to stand in the way and almost hinder you from coming to the LORD?

What did Jesus mean? Well, for one, you aren’t perfect. But, Jesus says you need to be perfect. And if Jesus said it, then it’s absolutely true. God wants you to be perfect. His goal must be to make you perfect. So, you see, He can’t and He won’t let you stay in the shape you’re in right now.

Now, practically speaking, none of us can make himself perfect. But, if you have a desire to be perfect, it’s only because you believe what Jesus says here. So, who’s ready to imitate the perfection of God, the Father? Does anyone really think he can be perfect like His Father in Heaven?

Moses, you’ll remember, gave us the Ten Command-ments. But, who can keep them? So, what can you do with these words? My hope is that today you will find answers for these questions.

Let’s begin with this word “perfect.” What does it mean to be perfect? What does it mean, not to you or me (because what we think is usually not the way things really are); but, what does it mean to the LORD? The way you know what a word really means is to go to the author. So, how is the word used elsewhere in the Bible?

Perfect means “lacking nothing, complete in all and every part, full-grown, mature.” Here’s how it’s used elsewhere in the Bible. James 1:2 *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers [various] temptations; (3) Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh [produces] patience. (4) But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be* ***perfect and entire, wanting [lacking] nothing****.”*

The Bible uses this word perfect in two ways. One is the goal and the other is the process. Perfect implies “complete.” But, when something is lacking in your life, and God is working on you, you are being perfected.

So, the LORD says “Be ye therefore perfect” and look to your Heavenly Father to do the perfecting. Here’s another passage that might help. I Thessalonians 5:23 *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (24) Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”*

You see, only the LORD is able to sanctify you wholly and to preserve you blameless until the return of Christ.

Did you know that once when some of our astronauts were on the moon, they got stuck there; for a while? This story comes from the book “Magnificent Desolation,” a story about an astronaut named Buzz Aldrin and the Apollo eleven moon landing mission back on July 20, 1969. Buzz Aldrin and his fellow astronaut, Neil Armstrong, had just completed their work on the moon. They entered the lunar module, expecting the lunar module to lift them off of the moon and back to the rocket Columbia, which would then carry them safely back to earth.

They noticed something on the floor. It was a circuit breaker switch that, in all their activities of going and coming from the lunar module to the moon, somehow had broken off from their electrical panel. It just so happened that this breaker switch was the one that activated the ascent engine, which was designed to take them back up and off the moon to the Columbia. If they couldn’t get that circuit breaker switch pushed back into the panel, there was no way they could fire up the engine to leave the moon. They were stuck.

Buzz Aldrin writes it this way. *“Since it was electrical, I decided not to put my finger in, or use anything that had metal on the end. I had a felt-tipped pen in the shoulder pocket of my suit that might do the job. After moving the countdown procedure up by a couple of hours in case it didn't work, I inserted the pen into the small opening where the circuit breaker switch should have been, and pushed it in; sure enough, the circuit breaker held. We were going to get off the moon, after all.”*

A felt pen is now sits in the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. to remind everyone that sometimes the smallest parts make the largest difference. [Found on [www.eetimes.com](http://www.eetimes.com) “How A Felt Tipped Pen Saved The Apollo 11 Mission” by Patrick Mannion, 07/20/09].

Now here’s how this story fits today’s sermon. The word Jesus used here, “perfect,” means “complete in all its parts; lacking nothing.” The system, the engine, the lunar module, and the breaker box were incomplete and unusable until Buzz Aldrin inserted his felt-tipped pen into the circuit breaker opening. Then it was complete. And they did come back to earth safely.

What could Jesus possibly have meant by “Be ye perfect even as your Father which in Heaven is perfect,” but this; “complete in all and every part”? It’s the exact same word as you’d use if you were putting a puzzle together and finally inserted the last piece. With the last piece, you’d say “It’s now complete.”

I want you to know that the day you discover and experience for yourself the “Exchanged Life” is the day you discover that last piece that makes your life with God work. Oh, and by the way, this piece of the puzzle is that largest piece.

Now, please go with me to the sixth chapter of Romans where the exchanged life is presented.

Here’s something I want you to see. The story of the Book of Romans.

Romans 1 – Immoral people have no excuse for not believing in God.

Romans 2 – Both good people and religious people also have no excuse for not believing in God.

Romans 3 – A conclusion: all have sinned; all have fallen short of God’s glory.

Romans 4 – How to be right with God – by faith; faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 5 – Justification (being made righteous) comes by faith in Christ’s blood.

Romans 6 – Your old man, was crucified, died, and was buried along with Christ. And, since you died with Christ, when He arose, you too arose from the dead.

Now, does God want you to change? Yes, He does. But He’s made a way for you to exchange your life for His. And that’s what makes all the difference for a Christian.

Paul explains it like this. He uses three main words; knowing, reckoning, and presenting. Let me show you what this means.

First, knowing; verse three.

Three times in this short passage Paul reminds you and me of a wonderful reality; you and I are united to Jesus Christ. And He uses this one small word. It’s the word “know;” verse three.

Romans 6:3 *“****Know*** *ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”*

Romans 6:6 “***Knowing*** *this, that our old man is [was] crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed [annulled], that henceforth we should not serve sin.”*

Romans 6:9 *“****Knowing*** *that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.”*

Now in your English Bible you usually use the word “know” in a mental way. But all three of these words are different words in the original language.

Here’s what Paul is really saying.

Romans 6:3 *“Don’t you* ***understand*** *that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?”*

Romans 6:6 *“****Realizing*** *this, that our old man was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed [rendered inoperative] that henceforth we should not serve sin.”* The original word means “to recognize or to become aware of, and to realize.”

Romans 6:9 *“****Seeing*** *that Christ being raised from the dead, dies no more, death hath no more dominion over Him.”* The original here in verse nine is the exact same word that’s used either when it refers to physical sight or to insight; like this *“Oh, now I* ***see*** *what you mean.”*

So, three different words for the same English word “know.”

To exchange your life for His life is what the Christian life is all about. Haven’t you noticed that you try your best to be a good Christian and it amounts to little or nothing? The reason is this. God’s not interesting in making you a better person as much as He is interested in making you a “little Christ.” The word “Christian” means “little Christ.”

Exchanging your life for His life is what the LORD is calling you to do. Watchman Nee puts it like this. *“We think of the Christian life as a changed life. But it is not that. What God offers us is an “exchanged life,” a substituted life. And Christ is our Substitute within.”*

And to do this, you first must come to an agreement with God about yourself. The more you try and the harder you try to live the Christian life, the more you gain confidence in yourself. And God’s goal for you is not self-confidence as much as it is Christ-confidence. So, agree with God. Know exactly what He says. Believe it. Say it. “I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live. Yet, not I. But Christ lives in me.”

First, knowing.

Second, reckoning; verse 9.

Romans 6:9 *“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. (10) For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. (11)* ***Likewise reckon*** *ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

And how do you do it? Here’s how. You “reckon.” To reckon means to count something true that really is true. To reckon is to count upon the truthfulness of something.

Here’s an example of reckoning. One day I came to see that the Bible teaches this about God. He is omni-present; which means He is everywhere present at the same moment. Now, once I came to that realization, I began to count it true in my thoughts and in my experience. He is omni-present. So, I’m simply counting as true what really is true.

Now, what does the Holy Spirit in Paul tell us to do? To it as absolutely and wonderfully true that we’ve been crucified along with Christ, that we are dead to sin, and that we are alive to God.

Look again at Romans six and verse nine.

Romans 6:9 *“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. (10) For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. (11)* ***Likewise reckon*** *ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

A Christian is someone who lives by faith; faith in all that God says. Honestly, I don’t understand the how. I really don’t’ know how I died along with Christ. But, each time I consider this truth, I reckon on it. The crucifixion is some-thing that is true. So, I am exercising faith in that fact. To reckon, to count true everything that is true is God’s way of enabling you to live your Christian life.

One, I now know that I have been crucified with Christ.

Two, I now count true the fact that I am indeed dead unto sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ.

So, here’s the practical side of this. Answer yes or no to the following questions.

Did Christ die *for* your sins? Romans 6:10 “For in that he died, **he died unto sin once**: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.” Then, yes, Christ did die for my sins. I believe God. I take this fact as true simply because God said it.

And did *you* die with Christ? Romans 6:6 *“****Realizing*** *this, that our old man was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed [rendered inoperative] that henceforth we should not serve sin.”*

Yes, I died with Him. It’s a fact. I believe it. I’m counting on its truthfulness.

And are you dead to sin? Romans 6:2 *“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”* Again, yes. Yes, I am dead to sin and I no longer live in it.

Folks, the LORD is calling you to live an exchanged life. Each time you reckon on the truth from God’s Word, you are living that exchanged life. Jesus exchanged His life for yours so that you might exchange your life for His. That’s the exchanged life and that’s the “reckoned” life. He’s calling you today to “constantly count yourself dead to sin and alive to God.” Are you doing this? If not, why not?

Some of you know Pastor Tony Evans, Pastor of Oakcliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, TX. Here’s how he describes the exchanged life.

“I'm convinced the reason a lot of Christians don't exper-ience the abundant life Christ came to give (John 10:10) is that many of us are *trying* to live the Christian life. That's not a contradiction, because the Christian life is, by definition, the life of Christ. So, in order for you and me to live the Christian life, Christ must live *His* life in and through us while we get out of the way. That's what we mean by the exchanged life.

The exchanged life begins with a death experience. Paul opens Galatians 2:20 by declaring, “I have been crucified with Christ.” Our crucifixion with Christ has already taken place. You may say, “But I don't feel crucified.” That's all right. Dead people don't feel dead. But you are crucified because God says you're crucified, whether you feel it or not.

This is why Paul could say his only boast was “in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). Paul rejoiced in the cross not just because it meant that his sins were paid for, but because the old Paul, the hate-filled persecutor of the Church, was dead and gone. Paul was eager to share in Christ's death so that he might share in His resurrection life.

In Galatians 2:20, where Paul said that since he had been crucified with Christ, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” When I exchange my life for Christ's life, He expresses Himself in me. When I think, Christ thinks through me. When I move, Christ moves through me. When I speak, Christ speaks through me. A complete exchange has occurred. That's why the Bible says that Christ is the fullness of God “in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete” (Colossians 2:9-10 NASB). He is all you ever need. We display the life of Jesus to the world when we live exchanged lives.

You may be reading this, scratching your head, and saying, “Tony, all of this sounds good. But it's not working for me. I pray and read my Bible. I go to Church and try to witness. I'm doing the right things, but I'm not seeing the victory you're talking about. What's wrong?” Paul continued in Galatians 2:20, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.” There it is. God's expectation is that we will live this new life by faith. The exchanged life, the life of freedom in Christ, is activated only by faith. Not by trying or straining or even praying. Faith is living as if God is telling the truth, whether we feel like or not. It may feel awkward at first if you're not used to living by faith. But that's OK.

Paul concludes Galatians 2:20 by talking about what Christ had done for him. “He loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.” Our “spiritual service of worship” (Romans 12:1) is responding to this sacrificial love and giving ourselves wholly to Christ, letting Him live through us. If Christ loved us enough to give His life *for* us, then He loves us enough to give His life *to* us, so that He might express His life [and His love] through us. When you exchange your life with the Christ who died for you and rose from the dead, He brings to you the power of His perfect, sinless life...” [Found on [www.gracefellowshipinternational.org](http://www.gracefellowshipinternational.org) “Free At Last” by Tony Evans].

First, knowing.

Second, reckoning. And remember, reckoning is something you do before you do something.

Third, presenting; verse twelve.

Romans 6:12 *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. (13) 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.”*

And here’s what this word “yield” means. It means “present.” Romans 6:12 *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. (13) Neither yield [present] ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield [present] yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”*

Can you see with me this exchanged life? Here’s what works when it comes to living the Christian life. The moment you begin to reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to God, you can present yourself and the members of your body to the LORD for His use.

I have one more testimony for you. This time it’s the testimony of one of the LORD’s missionaries, J. Hudson Taylor, missionary to China. Here’s how he describes the exchanged life.

This excerpt comes from a book titled “J. Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret” written by his son Dr. Howard Taylor. *“ . . . God made me a new man! God has made me a new man!” Wonderful was the experience that had come in answer to prayer, yet so simple as almost to baffle description . . .*

*Do you know, I now think that this striving, longing, hoping for better days to come is not the true way to holiness, happiness or useful-ness? It is better, no doubt, far better than being satisfied with poor attainments, but not the best way after all. I have been struck with a passage from a book . . . entitled “Christ is All.” It says, “The Lord Jesus received is holiness begun; the Lord Jesus cherished is holiness advancing; the Lord Jesus counted upon as never absent would be holiness complete . . . .”*

*“He is most holy who has most of Christ within, and joys most fully in the finished work . . .”*

*“. . . . To let my loving Savior work in me His will, my sanctify-cation, is what I would live for by His grace. Abiding, not striving nor struggling; looking off unto Him; trusting Him for present power; . . . resting in the love of an Almighty Savior, in the joy of a complete salvation, “from all sin” –– this is not new, and yet 'tis new to me . . . . Christ literally all seems to me, now, the power, the only power for service, the only ground for unchanging joy . . . .*

*How then to have our faith increased? Only by thinking of all that Jesus is and all He is for us: His life, His death, His work, He Him-self as revealed to us in the Word, to be the subject of our constant thoughts. Not a striving to have faith . . . but a looking off to the Faithful One seems all we need; a resting in the Loved One entirely, for time and eternity.*

*. . . . I looked to Jesus, and when I saw––oh, how joy flowed!” It was resting in Jesus now, and letting Him do the work––which makes all the difference.*

*Whenever Hudson Taylor spoke in meetings after that, a new power seemed to flow from him, and in the practical things of life a new peace possessed him. Troubles did not worry him as before. He cast everything on God in a new way, and gave more time to prayer.*

*It was the exchanged life that had come to him––the life that is indeed “No longer I.” . . . It was a blessed reality “Christ liveth in me.” And how great the difference!––instead of bondage, liberty; instead of failure, quiet victories within; instead of fear and weakness, a restful sense of sufficiency in Another.”* “J. Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret” chapter 14].

Folks, there is no way you and I can live our Christian lives apart from understanding, realizing, and seeing that we are united to Jesus Christ. Why? Because *your* life is His life. *His* life is your life. You can only live and obey and serve and worship and walk the walk as you are dependent upon the One Who lives in you. Remember, why was it that Christ come into this world? It wasn’t just to save you and take you to Heaven, as great as that is. It was that He, the God of the universe might live within you.

You see, the LORD has never called you to live anymore in your own strength. You did that every single day before you came to the LORD. And all of your Christian life is a learning and growing into this marvelous truth. Everything that happens to you is God’s way of moving in and taking full control of your life. And, as He takes full control, you finally admit that your ways are not His ways. And you look at the LORD Jesus and see Him living within you. And you are so glad that you no longer have to live in your strength. His strength is all you need.

In conclusion, here’s a passage from the Book of Isaiah that spells it out for you. Isaiah 40:31 *“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew [EXCHANGE] their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”*

So, today are you going to live the exchanged life or will you continue to live your life and hope the LORD will bless and use you?

And who here is willing to surrender all to Him?

“All to Jesus I Surrender” by Judson Van de Venter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JSXcvJJoqQ>

1. All to Jesus I surrender,  
   All to Him I freely give;  
   I will ever love and trust Him,  
   In His presence daily live.
   * *Refrain:*  
     I surrender all,  
     I surrender all;  
     All to Thee, my blessed Savior,  
     I surrender all.
2. All to Jesus I surrender,  
   Humbly at His feet I bow;  
   Worldly pleasures all forsaken,  
   Take me, Jesus, take me now.
3. All to Jesus I surrender,  
   Make me, Savior, wholly Thine;  
   Let me feel the Holy Spirit,  
   Truly know that Thou art mine.
4. All to Jesus I surrender,  
   Lord, I give myself to Thee;  
   Fill me with Thy love and power,  
   Let Thy blessing fall on me.
5. All to Jesus I surrender,  
   Now I feel the sacred flame;  
   Oh, the joy of full salvation!  
   Glory, glory, to His Name!

Prayer

Hymn # 589 “Here I Am, LORD”