

# Becoming Who You Are

by Hal Lindsey

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and applying God's truth to our lives, which involves understanding our new identity in Christ and the power of faith.*

**Duration:** 1:03:57

**Scripture:** Romans 6:17, 2 Corinthians 5:17

**Topics:** "Spiritual Transformation", "New Creation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher uses an illustration from the book 'Psycho-Cybernetics' to explain how God wants to bring about a change in our lives. The story is about a plastic surgeon who operated on a girl with a hooked nose, who considered herself the ugly duckling of her family. After the surgery, when the bandages were removed, the girl was amazed to see that she had become beautiful. The preacher relates this to the concept of the new self in Ephesians 4:23, where believers are encouraged to lay aside their old selves and put on the new self created in the likeness of God. The sermon emphasizes the importance of relying on the Holy Spirit and expecting positive transformation in our lives.

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## Transcript

I want to talk about something that has meant more to my life than perhaps any other thing the Lord has taught me. And I just, for lack of a better name, call it Becoming What You Are. It has to do with something that was set forth in a book that was circulated widely a few years ago, called, it was called Psychocybernetics.

Now many points of psychocybernetics were true, but I feel that there were a number of things that were borrowed from the Bible. But how you achieve the new self-image was really not the biblical way. What I want to talk about this morning, though, is the very real message that the Bible gives to us about actually becoming what you are and changing your self-image to what God says you really are.

You know, whether we realize it or not, and I'm sure the majority of people don't fully realize it, is that we have a very complete mental image of ourselves. In our subconscious mind we've been developing a kind of a mental blueprint of what we are. And this has been achieved by our own interpretation of our various experiences through life.

We've experienced many things. We have had good experiences, bad experiences, but of every experience that we've had we have an interpretation. And this goes down into our subconscious mind, and

we form a mental image of ourselves based on that.

All of our actions and behaviors are really determined by what we think we are. And it's very difficult to act any way other than what you conceive yourself to be. Now, this is paramount to understand, if you're going to understand what God has done for you, and understand how he wants to effect a change.

I think one of the best illustrations of this is one of the case histories that was listed in Psycho-Cybernetics. In this book, the man who actually wrote it was, first of all, a plastic surgeon. And he tells of how a member of a royal family from somewhere in Europe came to him.

He was a prominent plastic surgeon in New York. And this girl was the ugly duckling of the family. She had a sister who was very beautiful, but she always was considered, especially by herself, the ugly duckling of the family.

And one of the big problems is that she had a hooked nose. And so the doctor agreed to operate and to change her nose and a few other minor changes in her features. The doctor operated, and of course, her face was swabbed in bandages for a few days.

But then came the critical moment. And the doctor already knew from past experiences that this would be a critical moment, because as he removed the bandages, he wanted to watch her expression when he showed her the mirror. Well, he took the bandages off, and the doctor himself was really startled by what a change had been made in this girl's appearance.

Because as he took those bandages off, he found that she was absolutely beautiful. This had just completely changed her appearance, and she was just beautiful. Well, he took a mirror, and he held it up to her, and she looked intently into the mirror for about 15 seconds before registering any real expression.

And then she began to cry. And she said, you see, it didn't work. And the doctor said, now look carefully.

And she looked carefully, and she said it didn't work. This girl had such a complete and tenacious self-image of being ugly. And she even had thought that she was uglier than she really was.

But this was such a tenacious self-image that even presented with the fact of the fact that she looked different, she couldn't accept it. She still conceived herself to be what she had always been. She, through this self, this subconscious mental image, she just could not overcome the fact that she was different.

And so the doctor had to begin to work with her, and as a matter of fact, this is how Dr. Maltz shifted from being exclusively a plastic surgeon to becoming somewhat of a psychologist. Because in case after case where he changed a person's appearance, he would find that they still thought they looked the same way. And he would have to convince them that they were different.

It took him over six months to convince this girl that she was really what she was. And he said that when she finally saw in the mirror what was really there, that her behavior, her personality, changed overnight. It was radical, and it was a complete change of personality.

Now why? Well, because this girl conceived herself to be ugly, she acted a certain way around people. She was always trying to build herself up, because she never thought that she was good enough for people to accept. She kind of hung back in society, because she felt that people really wouldn't want to know her.

After all, in her own self-image, she was not worth knowing. And so even though she was changed after this operation, she still acted the same way. But the moment that she realized that she was different, she began to immediately act differently.

She began to have a self-confidence. She began to have a confidence about meeting people. She began to have a confidence about everything in life.

She began to think of herself as a success, instead of as a failure. Now I have a more graphic illustration of this, and something much more close to my heart, because I have twin daughters. They're 10 years old now, but about three years ago, one of my twins named Jenny began to get horrible grades in school, and especially in math.

She could not seem to grasp the very simplest facts in math. And she brought home a report card that just startled both my wife and I. She flunked math. And we began to sit and talk to her.

The other twin was very good in math. And so we began to talk to her about it, and to try to see what the problem was. Well, it seems that it went back to a situation where the teacher said, Jenny, I guess you're one of those who just isn't good at math.

And she began to develop a self-image, and of course it was confirmed by her bad grades. And the more it was confirmed, the worse she got. So she developed the self-image that she couldn't learn math, and therefore she couldn't learn math.

Now, it took us a while, but we began to build her confidence and to work with her. But the first thing we did was say, don't try to be good at math. Just recognize that you can be good at math.

And we began to change that self-image. And do you know something? She is far superior to the other twin now. She has become tremendous at math, and as a matter of fact, we have another problem now.

Robin, who's the other twin, who is a naturally good student, I mean, she just picks things up like that so easily. And she likes to study, at least she used to. And Jenny was the twin that, you know, had to study a little more.

But she's bright, it's just she wants to play all the time. She doesn't want to settle down. She's more like I was.

And so Robin began to see that Jenny got all of the attention because she got bad grades. And so Robin just quit. And so now we're giving her lots of attention because she's making bad grades.

But it's a deliberate thing. But all of these things go back to self-image. And it is a known fact that you just cannot consistently, and there's the key, you cannot consistently act differently than you conceive yourself to be.

Now you say, that sounds like, I didn't come here this morning, Hal, to hear a lecture on psychology, especially elementary psychology. Well, I certainly didn't come here to give you one either. But I think this is a principle that the Bible talked about long before Freud or Maltz or any of these people.

It's important to understand that without going into all of the technical details, the Scripture does talk about and does deal with your self-image first and foremost. For instance, have you ever noticed in the epistles of Paul, for instance, how that the first part of every letter begins how? What does he do? The first half in

some of them and the first part in at least a number of them. What does Paul do? Huh? Well, in a sense he does, but it's a very special way that he does.

He tells them what they are. And there'll be a phrase that's connected with it in every instance, in Christ, in Christ. He says, you're holy and without blame before God, in Christ.

Well, is that a myth or is he telling the truth? He talks about us having an inheritance with Christ that we're going to share with him forever. He talks about us being made a new creature in Christ. Now, is all of this just a bunch of words or is it true? And if it is true, what significance does it have to us? It has a tremendous amount of significance, because you see, God first begins to deal with you and tell you what he has already made you, the moment that you receive Christ and he puts you into union with his Son.

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17. Now, if you have the approved version, that's page 279. The approved version is the New American Standard Bible, which is the best that's ever been put in the English language.

2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17. Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old things passed away.

Behold, a few things have become new. Is that what it says? Behold, all things have become new. Now, this verse is so staggering that most people look at it and they say, man, that's neat.

But they'll either just sort of put it out of their minds or they will say, well, a few things are made new. But very few take this verse literally. And why do very few people take it literally? I'll tell you why.

Because after we become believers, we still have something within us that keeps tempting us and keeps dragging us to do the things that are not God's will. As a matter of fact, I remember when I first became a believer, for the first time in my life I noticed a tremendous civil war within my soul. I had noticed the pull of certain twinges of conscience before I was a believer.

But never anything like I sensed after I became a believer in Jesus Christ. Because after the experience of knowing Christ, I became very aware of what God wants in my life. And I also became very aware of something within me that kept drawing me away from God, kept tempting me to do things that were contrary to God's will.

And so I experienced a tremendous tug of war, a tremendous civil war within. And so I would look at a verse like this and say, well, either this verse is not true or I'm not a Christian, because all things are not new as far as I can see. And I happened to be going to a certain church in the South, which shall remain nameless, but it's one of the largest denominations in the South.

And the emphasis of the preaching was to sort of dedicate the flesh to try harder to be what God wants me to be. And the preaching was constantly sort of using a kind of a guilt motivation. You know, why aren't you like this? Here's what you ought to be.

Now why aren't you like that? And so they'd lay a big guilt trip on us. And then they would talk about all of the things that I ought to be. And it was sort of an avalanche of ought to be's.

And it was always an emphasis of do, do, do, do, do, with not enough of how to do thrown in to where you could even tell it. And so how this filtered down to me was that I was continually rededicating my life by

walking forward. I was continually making vows to God that I was going to try harder.

And I tried harder and I failed more. I coined the phrase in those days, Avis Christianity, we try harder. And that's why I was always second best.

But I'll tell you one thing, as far as being available to God and as far as wanting to do the will of God, no one could fault me on that. I'd make a hundred percent on that. But the misery and the frustration kept piling up until I came to a crisis point where I said, I don't know whether I want to be a Christian.

If this is what it is, I don't know whether I want to be one. Because I've never been a person who can kind of just halfway go at something. And if it doesn't work out, I'm not very disappointed.

No, I'm the kind of person who goes all out. And therefore, if it doesn't work, I'm so disappointed, I'm ready to get rid of it. And so under that kind of tutelage, I came to the point in life where I was sincerely trying with all of my heart.

And I'll tell you, the more I tried, the more I failed, the guiltier I got, the more I vowed, the more I failed. Because you see, God doesn't want us to vow that we will try harder. He wants us to first recognize that he has already made us something entirely new.

That the real you is something that is already holy and without blame before him in love. The real you has been transferred from being a slave to sin, to being a slave to righteousness, according to Romans 6, 17. You are now a slave of righteousness.

Now that's why you want to serve God. Now how did he make us a slave of righteousness? Through two great doctrines, which are facts. Number one, through the new birth.

The moment that you believe in Jesus Christ, you are given a new self, which has within it a nature that always wants to follow God. And the Spirit of the living God, the Holy Spirit, comes to dwell in this new self. He gives us in this new birth a whole new dimension of life, which is spiritual life, God's life.

And we can know and perceive God as a person. We can relate to him as a person when we're born again. And so we have been made something that really wants to follow God.

And the real you, as a Christian, will always want to follow God. And 1 John chapter 3 says, the real you never sins. Let's look at that.

Hold your place here, though. Hold your place and turn to 1 John chapter 3, verse 9. 1 John chapter 3, verse 9. No one who is born of God practices sin. Right now, in the original Greek, the word practice is in the present tense, which is a tense that means continuous action.

And so the idea here is, no one who is born of God will habitually practice sin. No one will keep on practicing sin as a habit of life. You can't just do it carelessly anymore.

You can sin as a Christian, but you can't be careless about it. You will be concerned about it. All right, now why is this? He goes on to say, because his seed abides in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

All right, now, the seed that is put in the Christian is born of God. And the he, after it says his seed abides in him, refers to this new self that is born within us. And it's talking about the new self, and it says he

cannot sin.

And so there is a part of every Christian which absolutely cannot sin, doesn't want to sin, and always wants to follow God. In other words, God has planted himself within our souls, and that part of God's life is a new self which always wants to follow God, which will be miserable when you sin, and which will always want to follow him. Now, that is the new creation that's within you.

And this new self that you have been made is holy and without blame. It does not ever sin, it doesn't want to. All right, turn with me to Ephesians chapter 4, where we learn more about the new self.

Ephesians chapter 4, verse 23, or let's begin with verse 22. That in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self which is being corrupted in accordance with the lust of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new self which in the likeness of God has been created in what? In righteousness and holiness of truth. Put on the new self which is in the likeness of God, and it has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Now, to illustrate what we're talking about here, laying aside the old self, putting on the new self, let's go back to this case of the princess who had the plastic surgery. All right, now when she first looked at the mirror and she said it didn't work, what was her problem? She still had the old self, didn't she? Her old self was her mental image of herself. All right, was the image of her old self true? Not anymore, no.

But you see, even though she had been changed, she still had the image of the old self. Now, as long as she had the image of the old self, how did she act? Like the old self. Now, God says that you have been made new, the real you does not sin, the real you has been created in the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness of truth.

Is that true? All right, is it true of you? Absolutely. Listen, whatever God says is true of you, whether you feel like it or not. No matter what your past history says, if God says something is true, it's true.

As a matter of fact, the most true thing about us is what God says is true about us. Wouldn't you say that? We do believe in the inspiration of the scripture. We do believe it's the infallible word of God.

All right, if God says this is true, it's true. All right, then what's the problem? Most of us are still going around with the old self image. Now, what's the old self image like? What's the old self like? The old self was corrupted.

The old self loved to sin. The old self wanted to go its own way. The old self was selfish and self-centered.

That's all it could be. The old self might have been mentally sick, something a lot of people don't know about me. I was very, I was very much mentally ill when I accepted Christ.

I'd lived five years on the brink of suicide and very nearly took my life several times. And when I came to know Jesus Christ, I was so emotionally damaged, I was so mentally ill that my expectation was that I would spend the rest of my life in a sanitarium. Now, when I became a believer in Jesus Christ, everything didn't disappear overnight.

In fact, I floundered around as a Christian for about a year, and I didn't go to church for about a year. I just read the Bible. There were some improvements in my life.

I began to have an assurance that Jesus Christ really was in my life. Then I started going to this certain church I mentioned, and then I very nearly really cracked up because of the guilt of failure. And then I went to hear a Bible teacher who taught the Bible verse by verse.

The first message I ever heard him teach was about the Suez Crisis in 1957. It was a prophecy message. Well, that got me convinced that the Bible was absolutely the Word of God.

Then I began to listen to him teach out of the Epistles of Paul, where he happened to be, and I began to get a new self-image. I began to get the truth of 2 Corinthians 5, where it says, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away.

Well, what I did was take and apply that to my situation. The old self was mentally sick and riddled with problems which were so complicated, the only hope I would have had in the world would have been to go to a psychiatrist for the rest of my life, and probably wound up taking my life anyway. But I began to see myself as a new person, and that my mind could be renewed.

Well, these things meant a lot different than most of the people who were hearing them. But I believed what God said, and God began to give me a new mind, which was really mine. I began to see myself as something all new in Jesus Christ, and I wasn't believing a myth, because God said it was true.

And you know something, I found this. Whatever you count true, which God has said, becomes true in your experience. First you don't feel like it.

I didn't feel like it when I first began to believe these promises. But in spite of my experience, in spite of the terrible periods of depression, I would say, I don't have to be this way, Lord. I am a new creation in Jesus Christ.

I believe you. Now you put up, or shut up. I've always been that kind of person, and God has been gracious with me.

But you know something, God cut off with me and everything else, but he also kept his word. And I began to experience a sense of peace, a sense of a new person. And this was absolutely fantastic.

Today, I'm not plagued with those things at all, haven't been for years. And God just erected a new person over the old person that I was. And the new person has in it the divine viewpoint of life which has been constructed on a study of the scripture.

But not just studying it as if it was something out there that I could tell other people, but studying it as something that is true of me, that I could apply to myself. And the big problem I found is this. How do you put on the new self? By beginning to see yourself as God says you are.

And regardless of whether you fail God today, yesterday, and day after day before, you begin to say to yourself, I don't have to act that way. I am a new creation who can trust the Holy Spirit to work in me God's righteousness. I don't have to try to be what God wants me to be.

I already have been made a new person and I can depend upon the Holy Spirit to make me what I already am. And to put down any invasion of the old self that tries to take over my life. And it's a moment by moment believing that what God says is true of you in spite of how you feel and depending on the Holy Spirit to make it an experience.

Now this is the pattern that the scripture says and it transforms life. It transforms lives, I don't say that theoretically, it's transformed mine. And God took me out of an horrible pit as the psalmist says and put a new song in my mouth, even praises to God.

And God said many shall see it and turn to fear the Lord and trust him reverently. And that's why I like to share my own experience because the Lord said if you share how he took you out of the pit, that it will encourage others to believe him too. Now I want to read something from a psychiatrist named Dr. Knight Dunlap.

This man to my knowledge is not a Christian, but he formulated this statement on the basis of many clinical tests and many case histories. Now this this quote is so fantastic that it thrills me. Now this is what Dr. Dunlap says, not on the basis of the Bible, but on the basis of many clinical cases.

He says, and I quote, self-effort is the one big deterrent to either breaking a habit or learning a new one. Did you get that? Self-effort is the one big deterrent to either breaking a habit or learning a new one. Making an effort to refrain from the habit actually reinforces the habit.

Would the Christians would learn that and that some Bible teachers would learn it. Exalting people to get self-effort into the act and try to change their habits only reinforces the habit. How many people have I seen try to stop smoking for instance? Now there's a goodie.

A particular church I attended in the south said that if you smoked you probably weren't a Christian. Not that smoking is right, I'm not saying that. But they set up a whole list of habits which you if you became a Christian you had to stop immediately or else you might not really be a Christian.

You couldn't drink, smoke, dance, go to movies, or play cards. We used to call them the big five. Well since I was a former riverboat captain and that's what I was doing when I came to know Christ.

I was a tugboat captain on the Mississippi River. I practiced all five of those things plus a few more. Since I lived in the French Quarter for five years I had them all and some they hadn't thought about.

But when I kind of drifted into that church and I found that if you know if you did these things you might not be a believer, I made a vow to God I would stop. And you know something? I stopped all of those things in the flesh and I managed to keep from doing those things for quite a while. But you know what happened in this place? I found that the real spiritual Christians would get up and share how they had stopped doing certain things.

And I saw that if you really wanted to be spiritual what you did was tell what you'd given up and appear humble about it. Well I got to where I could share glowing reports of what I had given up for the Lord and still look humble. And I got proud I was so humble.

I used to weep about what a humble guy I was. And then as all things like that do they begin to backlash and the old habits began to come back after a while. You know after the kick of the praise of the people wore off the things started coming back.

Well there's nothing wrong with getting rid of those habits and I believe that the Holy Spirit will deal with many habits in our life as we grow. But there's one thing I've learned that if you've been a Christian for about 15, 20, 30 years don't expect the Lord to suddenly deliver a newborn Christian of the habits that took him 20 or 30 years to kick out of your life. In other words don't expect them to do something you

weren't able to be led to do.

Recognize that babies spiritually are babies and it takes a while. But the Lord must work from the inside. The Lord must be able to work in our lives from the standpoint of seeing that we are a new person and then the Holy Spirit being set free to work on our inner desires.

And then the Holy Spirit one by one will begin to put his finger on certain things in our life that are displeasing to us. And it won't just be external things such as drinking and smoking etc. It will also be gossip.

It will also be character assassination. It will also be stretching the truth or bearing false witness or spreading rumors or causing division among the cisterns. I always have to have a little trouble shifting from talking to men to girls here.

But the Lord will begin to put his finger within on certain things. And you know when the Lord says okay this ought to go, then you can depend on the Holy Spirit and count it true that you are already set free from any bondage to any habit. And yet you don't try to put it out of your life yourself.

You see that you are free from being in bondage to any habit because you've been crucified with Christ and you no longer live. And the life that you now live is the life of the Son of God. And so you see that you already are a new person who has been freed from all bondage to all habits.

It's just a matter of claiming it and letting the Holy Spirit enforce it. And so you depend on the Holy Spirit, not human resources, to put things out of your life. And when the Holy Spirit puts them out they're really out.

And you can't go around and what you did because you didn't do it. The Holy Spirit did it. And what he does is a beautiful thing.

Now turn with me to Romans chapter 7. Verse 15. Now I'm reading from the New American Standard Bible. It may be just a little different from some of yours, but just I think it'll all be very close.

Verse 15. For that which I'm doing I do not understand. For I'm not practicing what I would like to do, but I'm doing the very thing I hate.

But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the law confessing that it is good. Now have you ever been in this place where the things you do you don't even understand? And the things you keep wanting to do you don't do. The things you hate you keep doing.

I call it Christian schizophrenia. And you keep being prodded by God's commandments, the law of Moses and so forth. You keep being prodded that certain things are wrong.

And you just with all your heart try to live up to these external commandments. And what happens is you don't understand what's going on, but you keep breaking them. You keep falling short.

You want to with all your heart, but you keep falling short. Now Paul says that through this, this is an experience of the Apostle Paul personally after he was a believer. He's giving us an autobiography in Romans 7 of his own experience after he was a young believer.

And he tells us how he discovered certain things about himself. Now he says the fact that I keep wanting to do the things I are, I keep wanting to do certain things and not doing, and I keep doing the things I hate. He says this makes me see that the law is good.

Now why does it make him see the law is good? Well because it shows that the law is God's perfect righteousness and perfect standard of righteousness. And he sees that he in himself keeps falling short of it. So it's accomplishing his job.

And it's good in that it shows us where we fail. But it's also good in that the law keeps probing into our soul and it keeps forcing us to see something. And Paul tells how he discovered something within his soul as a Christian that he didn't know was still there.

And what was that? Well let's look at verse 17. He says, So now no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh.

For the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am, if I am doing the thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

Now actually this is a passage that I read over for years and years. Even as a victorious Christian and didn't fully understand what it was saying. I had a natural human blindness to it.

What is this passage really saying? It is saying that when I sin I am no longer the one doing it. You see that? Who is the I in this passage? The I. I am no longer doing it. The new self.

So why do you sin as a Christian? If you're a new creature, all things have been made new. And the real you wants to always follow God. Where does the sin come from? The old flesh.

Or as it says here, sin in the singular. And sin in the singular refers to the nature of sin. Sometimes it's called the flesh.

Sometimes in this passage it's just called sin in the singular. But whenever it's called sin in the singular in Romans 6, 7, and 8. It's speaking of the nature of sin. The root nature with which we were born, which we still have as a believer, and which still tries to bring the old self back as the pattern of behavior.

Now it says, so now, no longer, verse 17, 7, 17, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. So Paul discovered through the law, forcing him to sin more, really. The law kept prodding him.

And the more it prodded him, the more he tried to keep it. And the more he tried to keep it, the more the old sin rebelled. And the more sin rebelled, the more he did sin.

So the law kept prodding him and saying, hey, Paul, you can't make it on your own. You can't live the Christian life by your own efforts. And Paul kept saying, yes I can.

All I need to do is dedicate myself a little more. And so boy, Paul would come back bloody, but not vowed. And he would keep trying to keep the law, and trying to keep the law.

And he kept trying with all of his might to be what God wanted him to be. And what did he experience? The things I hate, I keep doing. The things I want to do, I don't do.

I don't understand myself. And so he would come back for more. I must not be putting it together right, Lord.

Just give me a few more days and I will keep your law. And he would keep trying and trying. And finally, you know what happened? Verse 25, or verse 24, wretched man that I am, who will set me free from the body of this death? This is the great Apostle Paul, who became the greatest Christian ever lived.

So I'm excluding Jesus from that. But Paul became the greatest Christian that ever lived. He was the man who single-handedly took the gospel to the outer limit of the Roman Empire in his one lifetime.

But here he was, before he discovered the principle of self-image and walking and being filled with the Holy Spirit. Here he is, he's trying to live for God. And he tried real hard.

He's kind of, I guess I'm patterned like him. I throw myself into it so the disappointment is much more overwhelming than the usual. Paul tried so hard that he finally said, oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death? Now that was the great Apostle Paul as a Christian.

You know what he was saying? What do you mean when you say, get me out of this body? What do you think that means? Hmm? He wanted to die. He finally came to the place where he was so miserable, he said, Lord just take me home. Get me out of the body of this death.

Now in the process, though, he tells us that he discovered something. And it's very important to get these points. In verse 18, look at it again.

For I know that nothing good dwells in me. For the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. Did you notice any inconsistency there? I'll read it again.

For I know that nothing good dwells in me. For the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. What's wrong? Huh? The wishing is good, but I left something out, didn't I? I left out that is in my flesh.

You know why I did that? Because the average Christian reads it that way. He doesn't see that the qualifying clause, that is in my flesh. And this is where the common mistake comes.

Where Paul said, I know that nothing good dwells in me. Our minds usually stop right there. And we fail to see the qualifying phrase, that is in my flesh.

Now, you know, I used to think, and I was taught this by several well-meaning teachers, I used to think that it was spiritual to passionately hate myself. I used to think that it was really part of God's will for me to sort of mentally castigate myself and to say, what a no good person I am. And of course, when I sinned, I would really confirm that.

And I would go through this sort of a self-imposed penance where I would say, man, I'm rotten to the core, Lord. Forgive me. Forgive me, Lord.

I know I'm rotten. And that's why I did this thing. And I would quote to myself, there's nothing good in me, Lord, but you.

Is that true? If it's true, God's a liar. In fact, I've heard many testimonies where people got up and said, I'm nothing but a no good, rotten, dirty sinner. You know, when someone gets up and gives a testimony like that, I try to get out of their way.

You know why? Because when a person says that, that's their self-image. So how are they going to act? Like a no good, rotten, dirty sinner. Now, Paul said, there is nothing good within me that is in my flesh.

And the flesh is rotten, and it is dirty, and it can't even be reformed. That's why God's self, because he didn't even try to reform the old self, is impossible. But he gave us a new self, which is created in the likeness of God in righteousness and truth.

Now, for me to go around and to hate myself as a believer in Jesus Christ, and to keep looking at myself as something that is a failure, and something that just has to sin, and something that just has to be a slave to the old habit, is to call God a liar to his faith. And it also guarantees that we will continue to act exactly the way that we acted before we were believers. Because as you conceive yourself to be, so you are.

As a man thinks in his heart, what? So is he. That's talking about your self-image. What do you think about yourself? The Bible says, love others as what? As you love yourself.

Now, this is not self-centeredness. You know, it took me a long time to see I could accept what God had made me. That I could accept the new self that God has created within me.

And to accept that new self is not to be self-centered, or egotistical, or any such thing. It is simply to count true what God says is true, and to rejoice in what God has done. I didn't make me what I am.

God did. And so I can begin to accept the new person that God has made me. And as I do, I begin to become what God says I am.

I begin to look at the mirror of God's word, and I begin to see that I'm a whole new person. Now, turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 16. But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, just as from the Lord the Spirit. Now the veil, the veil that is over the heart of people, is that veil of unbelief that fails to take literally true what God says.

That's the problem of the Jew. But you see the Christian has that problem too. Now we can't help it, but as we can help it, but I mean it's a natural thing to have this veil.

We have to go through a crisis, I believe, of when we come to see that we must take true what God says, in spite of how we feel, or in spite of our past record. We must come to count true about ourselves what God says is true. Now when we begin to live like that, what happens? It says, we with unveiled face, behold as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord.

Now as we look in the mirror of God's word, you see the mirror stands for the Bible. As I look in the mirror of God's word, is there a veil over my face so that I can't really see what the Bible says I am? Or as we begin to just count true what God says, the veil drops and I begin to see myself in the scripture as I really am. Now what happens when that happens? I begin to see the very glory of the Lord about myself, because we are being conformed in what? His image.

And it's a process from one glory, to another glory, to another glory, to another glory, and on and on and on. But how does it happen? Through the Holy Spirit. But we must set the Holy Spirit free to transform us.

And how do we do that? By expecting to be and experience what God says we are. Now that's why I said in the beginning, the title of this talk is Becoming What You Are. You already are a new creature in Jesus Christ.

You are already accepted in the Beloved, Ephesians 1.6. Who is the Beloved? Jesus. And you're accepted in him, with the same love that Christ has, because you're in absolute union with him. And God sees you as he sees him.

You're already accepted with God. Jesus has so completely removed any barriers of sin from you, past, present, and future, that God will never stop accepting you once you're his child. And so let me ask you this question.

If God accepts you, can you accept yourself? If God can accept you, how dare you not accept yourself? And if you see that God accepts you, and you begin to accept yourself, you know what automatically happens? You begin to accept others as they are. How revolutionary this is, when two people who are married get a hold of this concept. And I've found that if you accept people, and love them, that this in itself is creative.

They begin to change, because they are released by your acceptance and your love. God's love and God's acceptance is creative with us. We find that we are free from guilt.

Hebrews 10.17 says, the Lord no longer takes note of our sins. He says, their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. God has a good memory, but he's chosen not to remember, because they're already paid for, so why dig up something that's been buried in the deepest sea, through the cross.

We find that we are free from Satan's dominion. Colossians chapter 1. I'll get the exact reference on that. Verse 13.

We have been delivered from the domain of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of his beloved Son. You know, it's really a good thing that I knew that, while I was writing Satan's Alive and Well on Planet Earth. Because Satan hit me with trials and temptations that were so great, and he's still hitting me, but not quite so furiously now.

But in the two years I was writing that book, Satan hit me with every area of weakness that I have, so tenaciously, that if I hadn't have known, that in my new self I'm delivered from his authority and power, I would have been swept away. We have been set free from slavery to sin. Romans 6, 17 and 18.

We have been set free from human efforts. Romans 8 verse 4, where it says, in order that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but walk according to the Spirit. We walk in a moment by moment dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and stop trying to live for God ourselves, and step out on faith expecting the Holy Spirit to overcome our temptations, to give us a positive deliverance over fear, to give us positive abilities to serve the Lord.

And he does. In the Christian life, you always get what you expect. You expect nothing, you won't be disappointed.

But this is one of the crucial truths of the Christian faith. As you look in the mirror of God's Word, every time you see the scriptures say something that is a straightforward statement about you, the believer. Begin to write it down on a card, and carry that card with you, and read it to yourself several times a day,

and just say, Lord, I don't feel like this is true maybe, but I count it as true.

And I thank you that the Holy Spirit will make it real, and an experience. Begin to do that, and you'll see the Spirit of the Lord begin to transform you from one degree of glory to another degree of glory, into the same image of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul meant in Galatians 4, 19, when he says, My little children with whom I travail in birth again, until what? Christ be formed in you.

It's possible for Christ to be formed in us. It's the work of the Spirit, but we must set the Holy Spirit free to do it by believing and counting what God says as true. Don't be like the princess with a whole new face, looking at the mirror, weeping over how ugly you are.

You're beautiful before the Lord. You're something special to him. You've been made a new creation in Jesus Christ.

Become what you are. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the privilege of having this treasure dwell in earthen vessels.

The excellency of the power might be revealed as coming from you and not from us. We pray that each one of us might continually believe what you've said, and that we might moment by moment rely upon the Holy Spirit, not ourselves. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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