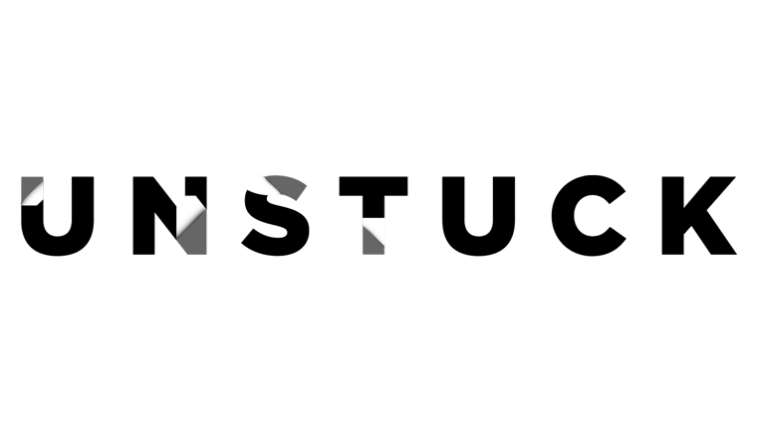
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**Part 2**

**Jesus Unsticks the Stuck (Cont’d)**

**Text: Colossians 3:3 “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”**

Listen to a paraphrase from the Greek: “Your union with Christ’s death broke the association with the world; see yourself located in a fortress where your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”

Why do so many believers stay stuck to vices, addictions, hurts and bad habits? Why do so many struggle to receive Jesus and his grace? Why don’t a majority of believers live free and full lives – the unstuck life? There are two reasons.

* First, they don’t properly value what Jesus accomplished on the cross.
* Second, they don’t know what happened to them on the cross.

Every believer knows that Jesus died on the cross for their sins, but not every believer knows they died too. The apostle Paul says so, again and again. To the Christians in Colossae, Paul said, **“*You* died with Christ” (Colossians 3:3).** To the believers in Rome, Paul said, **“*We* died with Christ” (Romans 6:8).** To the Corinthians, Paul said, **“*We* all died” (1 Corinthians 15:22).**

You may be thinking, “How’d this happen? I don’t remember the nails!” Well, when you were included in Christ, you were baptized into his death. Water baptism is simply a reenactment of what really took place on the cross. His death became your death, and this is really good news! He didn’t just come *for* you, he came *as* you. He was your substitute. Before I had a revelation of the New Covenant I thought these were verses about water baptism, but they aren’t. These verses are describing the real baptism of which water baptism is but a reenactment. You’ve been baptized into Christ. To baptize means to dip, in the sense of dipping a t-shirt into dye. The white t-shirt goes in; a purple or blue or red t-shirt comes out. Something like that happened to you when you were dipped into Christ by the Holy Spirit. You went in looking like Adam; you came out looking like Jesus. You went in an orphan; you came out a son. You went in flawed; you came out faultless. You went in a victim; you came out a victor. You went in broken; you came out complete. You went in dirty and distant; you came out clean and close. Before you were baptized you were alienated from the life of God; afterwards you were connected to the life-giving vine.

When you got saved you were probably told a lot of wonderful things about your future. You may have been told some wonderful things about your present.

But you probably didn’t hear many wonderful things about your past.

The truth is, your past matters a great deal. If you think you only “CAME OUT” of Egypt then you may be tempted to “GO BACK” to Egypt.

But when you see your old life as crucified with Christ, that tie is severed, cut off, removed. In other words, the old Egyptian no longer lives and Egypt no longer appeals. You didn’t just come out. The old was CUT OFF. The word Paul used was “circumcision,” which is the cutting off of flesh. **Colossians 2:11** says it this way, **“When you came to Christ, you were circumcised, but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature.”**

Here’s the good news (and it’s today’s confession): God isn’t only the Lord of your present and future, he’s also the Lord of your past. When you were born again, he gave you a brand-new life complete with a brand-new past. You have a new history and it began at the cross where you died with Christ. You have a glorious new present and future…and you also have a glorious new past.

**Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”**

Your baptism into his death is just about the most important thing that ever happened to you, yet many Christians are ignorant of it. Ask most Christians about their past, and you’ll hear all the bad things that happened to them and all the stupid choices they made in their old life. Although their intent is to glorify Christ, the reality is they’re living in the shadow of someone else’s past. Their present is haunted by the ghost of who they used to be. Their shadow boxing an imaginary opponent.

Just once I’d like to hear a testimony like Paul’s: “I was born, I did some stuff, then I died. I was crucified with Christ, and the person I used to be no longer lives.”

Paul understood that the foundation of our new identity with Christ is a revelation that we died with him.

**2 Timothy 2:11 “*This is* a faithful saying: For if we died with *Him,* we shall also live with *Him.”***

Paul hammered this point in his letters because **if you don’t know that you’ve died, then you won’t ever really live.** Instead, you’ll spend your life trying to die; dying to self, dying daily, and crucifying the flesh.

I can hear it now. “Pastor, but isn’t following Jesus a matter of dying daily to ourselves and our desires?” Nope. The phrase “die to self” isn’t even in the Bible. When Jesus said in **Matthew 16:24, “If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me,”** he was showing us the way to salvation—it’s through the cross. If you’d follow Jesus, then follow Jesus. Jesus died once and he’ll never die again. It’s the same with us. We were crucified once; we need never be crucified again. You don’t need to “die daily.” Once will do the trick. Thank God!

The problem with any message on self—even a noble sounding message on self-denial—is that it promotes *self*. It fuels self-centeredness which lies at the root of all that’s wrong with humanity. In the church self-denial is usually packaged as

part of the spiritual disciplines. But in truth it’s nothing more than the belief that we can attain spiritual goals by abstaining form physical pleasures. That’s called religion. I’m not denying the benefits of abstinence; I’m just saying that skipping cheeseburgers won’t make you holy and righteous.

The truth is that you can do nothing to save yourself or make yourself pleasing to God. Jesus does it all! If you could do something, then Christ died for nothing.

Its is apparent, through many portions of Scripture, that God does not require of self-works and performance to produce acceptance with Him.

What He does desire is a childlike response to His work upon the cross. One Translation says in Acts 17:11 that, “…the whole matter is now on a different plane-believing instead of achieving.

We see in several scripture stories that the message of the gospel and of Christ is almost pre-told. It is like the Lord was giving sneak peeks into the story of redemption. The Exegeses Translation call it “pre-evangelism.”

One of these previews is in the story of Cain and Abel. Cain, we see in Genesis chapter 4, offered a sacrifice from the produce of his hands, till and working the cursed ground. But Abel offered a firstling from his flock, which was a type of Christ.

The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. The word respect is shaw-aw. It means to gaze or to look upon. The Lord looked upon Abel’s offering but could not look or gaze at Cains offering.

The writer of Hebrews says that by faith Abel offered a better sacrifice. Why was it a better Sacrifice? It was because Abel offered in faith, not from the self-works of his hands.

When we bring a sacrifice from the works of our hands seeking right standing, the Lord cannot even look at it. All He will accept is Christ’s offering.

If righteousness was gained by our works and great obedience, Christ died for nothing. But it was through His good work and great obedience that righteousness came. He became sin that I might become the righteousness (the moral rightness) of God.

We have 2 choices:

1. **Refuse** His work and continue in ours (also known as the Law of sin and death and self righteousness)
2. **Rest** in His work and accept that we’re already sanctified and holy, and were already His righteousness.

Jesus unsticks the stuck. True gospel churches understand this, which is why they’ll never seek to distract you by preaching messages that glorify self or self-effort. They echo Paul who said in **2 Corinthians 4:5, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Christians who don’t know they’ve died with Christ end up living two lives. That’s called schizophrenic Christianity and I lived it for many years. I touched on it last week. On the one hand I tried to walk in the new life I’d received in Christ, but on the other I tried to reform the old life I inherited from Adam. I tried to unstick myself. This is a recipe for misery. No one wants to be one person on Sunday and another on Monday. Live like this and it’ll tear you apart.

The cure for schizophrenic Christianity isn’t to “try harder” or “run faster” or “get stronger” or “step your game up” or “re-dedicate” or “re-commit” or “follow these twelve steps to a new you.” It’s a revelation that your old self was crucified with Christ. It was cut off.

So what’s your old stuck-self?

It’s the person you used to be before you met Jesus. It’s who you were in Adam before you were put into Christ. Paul wrote in **Romans 6:6** that **“we know that our old self was crucified with him.”**  Look at his choice of words; *was* crucified. Past tense. Done and dusted. Dead and buried. Sign and sealed. Case closed.

Do you see how freeing this is? The old man was unfixable. He was broken, corrupted, and completely screwy. He was stuck—a slave to sin who lived for himself and no amount of reform could unstick him. But the good news is—he’s dead. That hopeless old so-and-so was nailed to the cross with Jesus and he no longer lives.

What died? Your fallen personality. Your old stuck self. Your old depressed, defeated self. Your old sinful self. The old fearful you was buried. The old anxious, stressed-out, worried you took a bullet. Your poverty died with Him. Your sickness died with Him. Every bit of darkness and disease that you once were died with Him. All your road rage took a tumble. Your old religious self was also crucified. The new you is unstuck. The new you is free, alive and full of life and love. The new you is full of faith. The new, True Self is prosperous, bold and overflowing with hope, peace and fruitfulness. The old critical, introverted you is dead. The old addicted you is dead. The new self is completely restored to childlike innocence and trust. Ultimately, the new you is righteous, pure and holy. The old you doesn’t even exist. It was an unseen death. You didn’t feel the nails, because it was a mystical death. But nevertheless, a very really one. You were really present on the cross of Calvary. You died!

If the average believer could grasp hold of this truth – I died – half of our church programs would stop immediately. We’d stop trying to reform the old man, because the old man is dead. We’d stop struggling so much to unstick the old man, because at the cross he died and our new life, in Christ, is the unstuck life! We’d finally start living a free and full life. We’d finally start living the life we were meant to live. We’d finally start overflowing with the life of God.

Pastor Ben made four confessions in part 1. I think I’ll make another one this week. I love gangster movies. I admit it. *The Godfather, Good Fellas, Scarface, A Bronx Tale, Black Mass.* Please don’t hate me! If there’s one thing I’ve learned from the movies, it’s that there’s no problem that can’t be solved by faking your own death and running away to a new life. Believe me, as a pastor, I’ve felt like doing that a few times. Ok, just go with me.

Think of a wise guy who’s part of a crime family. He’s under pressure from his mob boss to risk his life by engaging in criminal activities. At the same time, the law hounds him on account of crimes he’s already done. After a while, the wise guy realizes he isn’t his own man and life’s no fun when you aren’t free. He begins to long for a new life but finds he’s hemmed in on all sides. He’s stuck. If he stays with the family he’ll likely end up prematurely dead. But if he turns himself in, he’ll spend the rest of his life behind bars. Either way, it’s a lose-lose scenario. In his desperation, he begins to make an audacious plan—fake his own death and run away to a new life. “Mexico, here I come.”

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. The lose-lose scenario in the movies illustrates how it was for us when we were part of Adam’s family of sinners. We felt the pressure to conform to the cravings of the world and live as children of disobedience. At the same time our consciences bore witness to the law in our hearts that we were unrighteous and guilty of sin. After a while we realized we weren’t in control of our lives and life’s no fun when you aren’t free. We began to long for a new life but found we were hemmed in on all sides. We were stuck! As members of the family of Adam we were captive to our appetites and enslaved to sin. We wanted to do the right thing but we frequently stumbled. We looked to religion for help and found it was a prison. All it offered was the prospect of a lifetime running on the treadmill of self-effort. Self-indulgence or self-denial, either way it’s a lose-lose proposition. Thankfully, someone told us about God’s audacious plan – the gospel!

**Galatians 6:14 “Through the cross the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.”**

This was no fake death with flaming car crashes and secretive flights to Mexico, but a real bona fide death on a cross. We really died with Him. Do you realize what this means? It means we’re truly and legitimately unstuck. We’re free!

**Romans 6:6-7 “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who had died has been freed from sin.”**

Real life is better than the movies. Our fictional wise guy will never enjoy his new life in Mexico because he’ll always be looking over his shoulder waiting for his old life to catch up with him. Not us. Our old life is dead. There was a funeral, a tomb, and everything. The old has gone and we’re now free to walk in newness of life—the unstuck life.

I can hear it now! “But Pastor, if I’m truly unstuck, why do I still *feel* stuck to vices and addictions?” We don’t live by how we feel, we by the faith of Jesus.

**Galatians 5:1 “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”**

Allow me to close by doing two things: 1. Paint a picture of what Christ-bought freedom looks like, and 2. Show you how to walk in freedom. Are you ready!

When you were in Adam, you had no choice but to walk according to the flesh. Trusting in your own abilities and walking by sight is what unbelievers call “normal life” but it’s a faithless life and it isn’t working.

Since anything that isn’t of faith is sin, your former life was inherently sinful. I don’t mean to say you were a raging criminal. It’s just that you were incapable of pleasing the Lord, no matter what you did. You may have been a good sinner or a bad sinner but you were a sinner nonetheless. You were separated from the life of God through your ignorance and unbelief.

But now you’re a saint, and a sinner no more. You have a new identity, a new life, and a new master. You’re no longer stuck—no longer a slave to sin. You now have freedom to choose how you’ll walk, either in the old way of the flesh or in the new way of the spirit. You can choose to eat from the tree of morality or the tree of life. You can choose death or life. But here’s the important thing: If you choose to walk in the old way, your new life will resemble your old one. This is why some Christians are still stuck. They’ve left Egypt, but Egypt hasn’t left them. They’re still thinking like slaves and listening to the voice of their old master.

It doesn’t help matters when these precious brothers and sisters are told by pastors and church leaders that their sinful cravings and behaviors prove they still possess a sinful nature or an innate tendency to sin. This is simply not true. It’s not the gospel. Your old self was crucified. Any sinful nature you once had has been cut off, and that circumcision wasn’t done by the hands of men. You’re one with the Lord. I’m going to teach on this next week. You don’t have two natures dueling for control inside you. You’re a partaker of the sinless life and divine nature of Jesus Christ. Start believing it!

**Romans 6:10-11 “The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”**

So, how do you walk in the freedom you already have in Christ? Remember: You don’t need to do anything to earn your freedom; you’re free. Freedom is your starting point. You don’t have to fight for freedom when you already have it! Be free! Two points for you today from Romans 6:11.

1. **“Count yourselves dead to sin.”**
2. **“Reckon yourself alive to God in Christ Jesus.”**