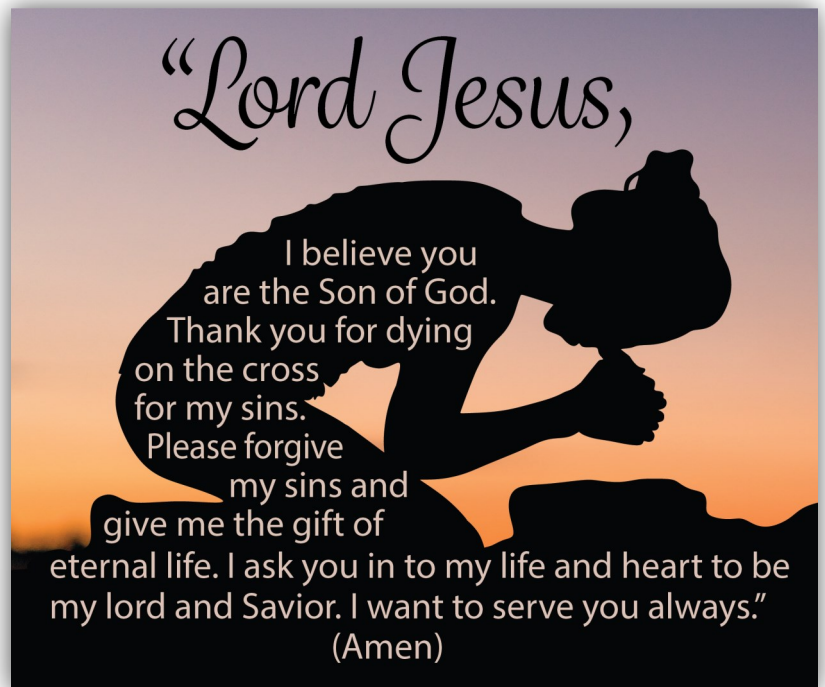


Living Redeemed

You likely remember the specific situation you were in when you asked Christ to be your Lord and Savior. It is a decision that changes your life's trajectory forever. It is a declaration that you are no longer running your life—God is. It begins a journey that many people refer to as *dying to your flesh*. Which I always thought that was an odd use of words but I now understand that when we choose to live by faith in Christ, we are choosing to live differently than the world.

Being saved (which means we are saved from damnation for our sins) means we know our sins are forgiven—past, present and future. We know we will be with God for eternity. But some people don't live as if they are redeemed. Some still carry around shame and guilt from their past and struggle with low self-esteem. Why? What Christ did on the cross is sufficient but we are essentially saying that it wasn't sufficient if we still carry our shame and guilt.



We need to embrace the incredible love of Christ and receive His release from our shame and guilt. We can realize that because of our past we will be more forgiving of others and may even be called upon by God to help others to not do what we did. We know...

"...that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28

He is in control and makes messages out of messes. It's important that we are a testimony to the amazing freedom that God gives those who follow Him. If you hang onto your past, you can't demonstrate that freedom to others.

When we live redeemed, we are free from guilt and shame from the past and then begin a process known as progressive sanctification where we progressively grow in our likeness to Christ. We do this by learning His Word, praying and worshipping.

Dying to the Flesh

Before we asked Christ to be our Lord and Savior, we lived solely for self. Our flesh—or our will—was in total control. We did what we wanted to do when we wanted to do it. But when we commit to Christ we are choosing to live for Him and not for ourselves. This isn't an overnight thing though. We will still face the cravings of the flesh. For instance, if you used to lie and justify it as a "little white lie" then you will be tempted to continue doing so. However, God tells us never to lie. Therefore, we will have to be intentional about first, confessing our sin to Him and then asking for Him to help us to stop. Then we will have to be alert to our thoughts and resist the temptation to lie always—regardless of the situation. It takes time and more importantly, it takes a heart that wants to serve Him rather than yourself.

If you ask Christ to be your Lord and Savior, but just go on living as you did then one would have to wonder if you *really do want Him to be your Lord*. Some people want a ticket to Heaven but continue to live for self. It doesn't work that way. God knows your heart and if you asked Him to be your Lord and Savior just to serve yourself, then you didn't really want Him to be Lord. If you want to be Lord of your life, you can't be a Christ follower.

The process of dying to your flesh means choosing to do what God wants you to do rather than doing what you want to do. It means putting on the armor of God...

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Ephesians 6:10-17

and fighting against the battle of your flesh. You can't do it on your own. You need God's help. He will give you what you need.

"God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

1 Corinthians 10:13

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

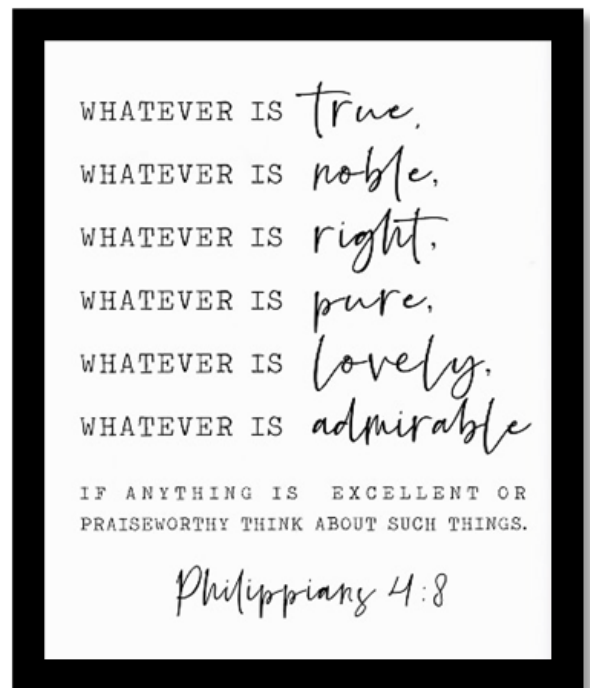
And the peace of God,



which transcends all understanding, will guard your heart & minds in Christ Jesus.

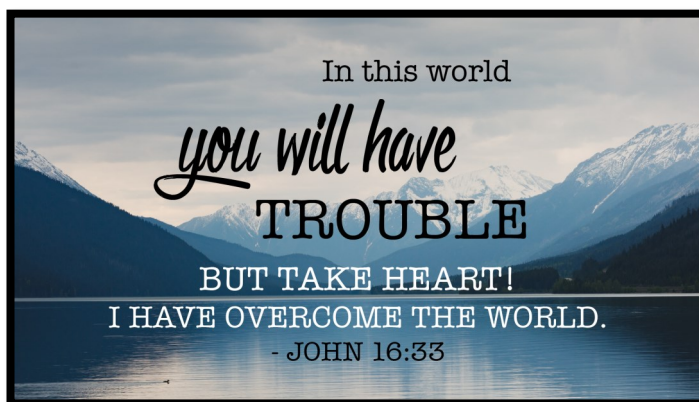
-Philippians 4:6-7

The number one reason people struggle with dying to their flesh is pride. We desire to run our own lives. Since the beginning of man (Adam and Eve) we have wanted to be like God and be in control. But we know what happens when we try to run our own life—we aren't ever satisfied. There's an empty place that cannot be filled. Many try to fill the hole with drugs, alcohol, sex, shopping, gambling, work, achievement, sports, etc. but that always ends up quite poorly since those outlets don't satisfy and often end in addiction. Living for ourselves is usually when we get to the end of ourselves and ask for God's help. But even those who have reached a devastating low in life will often fight with dying to their flesh. You have to be diligent to change. God does the transformation but we need to take action. How? By taking every thought captive and bringing into alignment with God.



For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

It can feel like a full-time job to change our thoughts in the beginning, but over time God transforms your thinking. What used to be hard will no longer be a challenge. You will need to train your mind to think on what God instructs you to think on...



Then over time, you will see His glory and His freedom. Your trust in Him will grow every day and your worries will dissipate because you are following His command to:

Living free from worry, stress, anxiety, depression, striving for success, and loneliness is an amazing way to travel through life on earth. Especially since we are told by God that...

We can expect trouble in this life on earth but we know we will have eternity with God where there will be no tears.

Friends, we have so much to look forward to in Heaven. Use your time here on earth to learn about our Creator, and to serve Him well. We are to be His Ambassadors. If unbelievers are watching you, what are they seeing?