

# Are You Dead or Alive?

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Is it right and necessary that believers should live a separated lifestyle? Must a Christian keep his or her fleshly nature nailed to the cross? At what point do these concepts, considered by some to be homely and obsolete, lose their value to our relationship with God. *Answers:* Yes, yes and never. Here's why:

We must start with the cross. Jesus Christ's death crucified the flesh both literally and symbolically. *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."* 1 Peter 3:18

The cross was no capricious, hasty act. By crucifying the flesh, Jesus demonstrated that the flesh *could not be saved!* There was no sin, of course, in the flesh of Christ, but the flesh of man was wholly corrupt. Evidently, something was so wrong with man's flesh that it could not be salvaged. In Christ, the flesh had to die so that the soul could be saved. *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."* Galatians 2:16. The inherent sin problem disqualified the flesh and its Adamic nature from a completely restored relationship with God.

With regard to the flesh, the crucifixion of Christ accomplished three specific goals: 1) It abolished the transgression of Adam, Romans 5:14-21, 2) it gave the nature of Adam a master, Romans 7:23-25, and 3) it made heaven accessible for the redeemed alone. Ephesians 2:15-22. Each of these accomplishments of Calvary dealt a death blow to the hegemony of the flesh.

The clincher is this: The promise of a glorified body emphatically shows that the flesh cannot be saved. *"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God ; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption...for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."* 1 Corinthians 15:47-53. This transformation extends beyond physiological properties. It encompasses the nature of the flesh itself.

How does this impact our treatment of the flesh today? We do not yet have a glorified body, and we remain under the influence of Adam's fleshly nature. Therefore, until the literal change takes place, we live our lives in a *reckoning* state. *"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Romans 6:11. In other words, our new, grafted nature notifies the former landlord that a new master has taken up residence. The holiness lifestyle reflects the victory of the cross over the flesh. *"Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."* Ephesians 2:15-16.

Believers should not be frustrated or confused by the difficulty of holy living. There will always be continual tension between the flesh and the spirit. *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the*

*things that ye would.*” Galatians 5:17. However, if we truly have faith in Christ that the spirit won the victory over the flesh, we will continually subject the flesh to the power of the crucifixion. *“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* 2 Corinthians 7:1.

Why, then, must not the flesh rule your life? Because when the flesh is in bondage, the Spirit has liberty. On the other hand, the believer who foolishly grants liberty to the flesh, places the Spirit in bondage. Our Christian liberty is freedom from the Mosaic ordinances, not liberty for our carnal nature and desires. *“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”* Galatians 5:13 *“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”* Galatians 5:24. To abandon, discredit or ignore holiness is to negate the purpose of the crucified Christ.

Holiness, within and without, bears the closest resemblance to the crucified Christ—symbolically and literally—that is achievable in this life. *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”* Galatians 2:20