

Removing the grave clothes.

When we are born-again , brought to life by the Spirit of God, we are still bound and inhibited by things that pertain to our unsaved life, the life of darkness and death.

The Lord wants us to be freed from these grave-clothes that inhibit us and prevent us from experiencing the life of abundance that He has promised.



The Passover and what it symbolised.

Many professing Christians have not entered the abundant life that Jesus Christ promised to His followers.

Their testimony is not one of gain, but of loss, their spiritual life is fore shadowed in the Old Testament wanderings of the Israelites, wandering around in the desert grumbling and complaining about every new challenge.

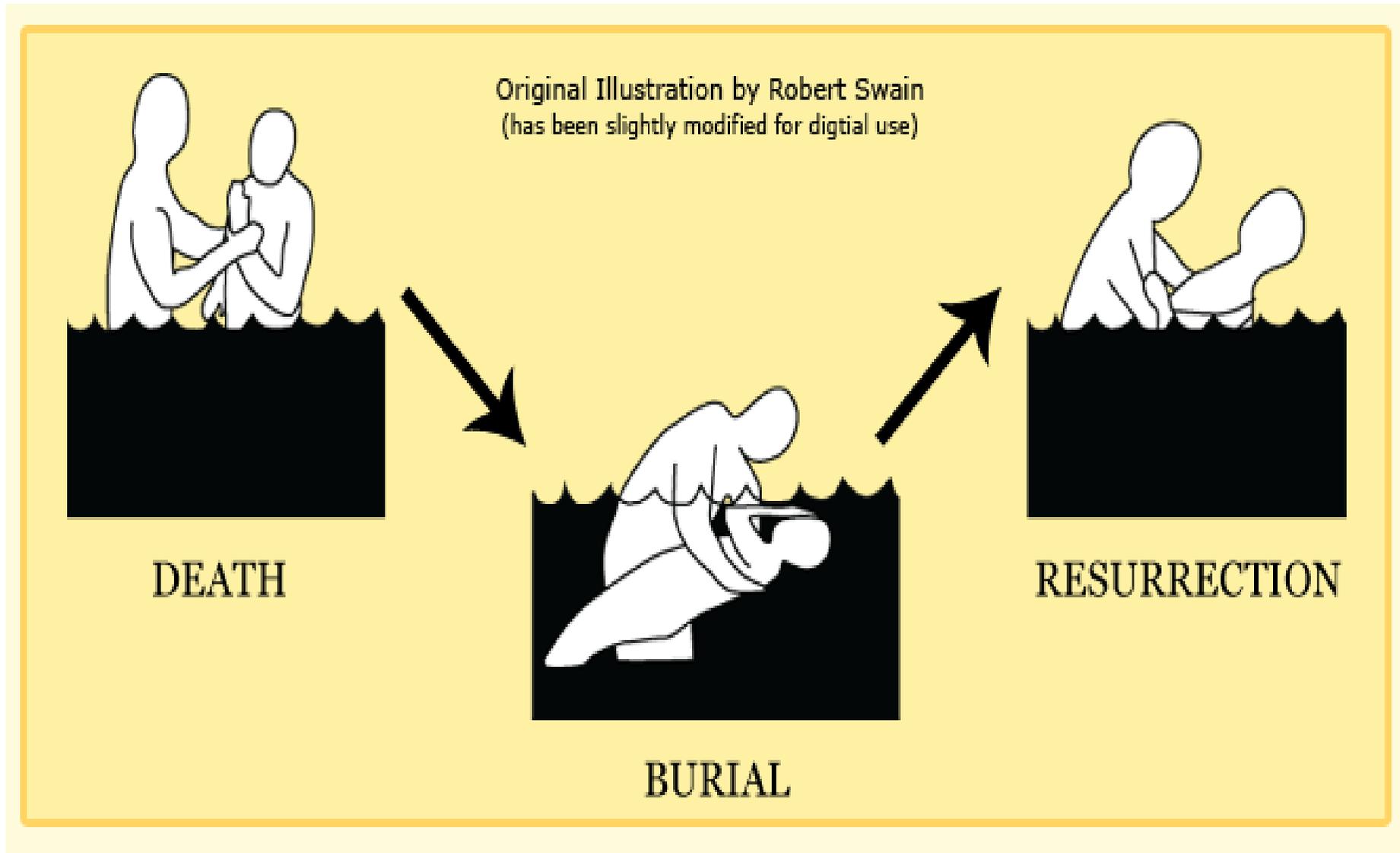
They reflect longingly on their previous life of slavery and the Lord has to provide for them or they would starve.

They never cross over the Jordan into the abundant life of fulfilment that is on offer to the Spirit led child of God but languish and die in the wilderness, brought out of Egypt but never brought into the promised land.



The resurrected life.

Baptism is symbolic of the death of our life (A funeral, or burial) so that Christ can live His resurrected life through us.



The Passover and what it symbolised.

Exodus 13:9,

This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that this law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year.

- 1. This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand.**
The Passover observance is a reminder that Salvation changes the things you do.
- 2. A reminder on your forehead.**
Salvation changes the way you think.
- 3. This law of the LORD is to be on your lips.**
Salvation changes the way you talk.

The Passover and what it symbolised.

- ❖ For the children of Israel, the Passover symbolised their freedom from the slavery of Egypt and being brought into the promised land, flowing with milk and honey.
- ❖ For the Christian, the breaking of bread (Communion) which is the fulfilment of the Passover feast, symbolises the fact that the Lord setting us free from the slavery of sin and this world, bringing us into a life of abundance.

**Salvation is not just a bringing out, but a bringing in,
it is not just a giving up, but receiving,
it is not just a losing, but a gaining,
it is not just a putting off, but a putting on.**



Removing the grave clothes.

John 11:38-44.

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. Take away the stone, he said. But, Lord, said

Martha, the sister of the dead man, by this time there is a bad odour, for



he has been there four days. Then Jesus said, Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God? So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me. When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, Lazarus, come out! The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, Take off the grave clothes and let him go.

The Lord does the impossible and leaves the possible up to us.

Removing the grave clothes.

Lazarus emerges from the tomb *alive*.

- But he's quite encumbered, restricted, hindered, and inhibited by his burial wrappings. He's been freed from the *grave*, but is still bound by his *grave clothes*.
- Jesus doesn't tell Lazarus to free himself from his grave clothes.
- Jesus doesn't do anything directly to remove them.
- Instead, Jesus calls Lazarus' relatives and friends into action: "*Unbind him, and let him go.*"
- So, freeing Lazarus from the captivity of his death wrappings turns out to be a community project. And so it is with us. When Jesus calls us from our spiritual graves to new life, suddenly we are no longer corpses. We emerge from our tombs very much alive to God.
- But, like Lazarus, we find that we're still wrapped up tight in our death rags.

Removing the grave clothes.

We're still confined by our burial wrappings—old habits, old behaviours, old patterns of thinking, old wounds—and we're not able to freely move about.

- All these restricting sheets and cloths and strips are part of our grave wardrobe, and we need to be unbound in order to walk freely in our new life.
- We can't free ourselves, so Jesus calls us to find freedom in spiritual community. In community, we are to help each other get unwrapped, unbound and set free.
- And the freer we are from our own wrappings, the better able we are to help loose others from theirs.

There is a life of abundance that is on offer for every born-again Christian, but you first must take off those grave clothes.

Let us consider how we may help one another toward love and good deeds, encouraging one another.

Hebrews 10 :24-25

Removing the grave clothes.

Unfortunately most modern Christians never take off their grave clothes and live their entire lives in these rotting, smelly clothes that represent the deadness and corruption of our old sin nature.

Jesus has provided through his finished work on the cross and his resurrection, a new set of clothes of righteousness and holiness that are pure, and reflect the very heart of God.

- **A.W. Tozer:** God is not honoured by our arrested development. The New Testament teaches that we should go on to full maturity, that mediocrity is not the highest that Jesus offers...The word “mediocre” comes from two Latin words with mean “halfway to the peak” You cant be a baby all your life!
- **A.W. Tozer:** The devil makes it his business to keep Christians in bondage, bound and gagged, actually imprisoned by their own grave clothes.
- **A.W. Tozer:** The modern day Christian is not Christ-like. He is quick to defend his flaws, his weaknesses and defeats in fiery red-faced indignation...

The moth and the cocoon.

A little boy was once playing in a forest near his home.

One day as he meandered between the trees, he noticed a small cocoon hanging from a low-lying branch of one of the trees.

Curious, he approached the cocoon and studied it. Just as he was about to leave, he noticed the cocoon was moving. Over the next few minutes he observed a tiny moth break open part of the cocoon then struggle to get out of the confined space.

Feeling pity for the poor moth, the little boy grabbed a stick and helped the insect break free. Only as the moth fell to the ground did the little boy notice the moth's shrivelled wings.

What he didn't realize was the moth's wings are strengthened by the struggle to break free from the cocoon. While the boy thought he was helping the moth, he hampered its growth and hindered it from fully developing into what it needed to be.



The moth and the cocoon.

Have you ever felt as if you're struggling through a trial, wondering why God has placed you in such a situation. What we often don't realize is that God's trials are like that cocoon. They are meant to strengthen us so we can develop into the Christians we need to be. As parents, we may desire to withhold discipline from our children so they will not have to endure it, yet we know they must endure it if they are to develop into well-behaved young people.

Don't make the mistake of giving new converts licence to sin by throwing God's law out the door, but there are things that are part of our old life that we need to be freed from and the help of the Body of Christ plays an important role.

Hebrews 12:1.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

1. The grave clothes of bad habits.

Hebrews 12:1.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.



Stephen Mattson: Christians are known for doing some good things: helping the poor, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, uplifting the downtrodden, fighting for justice and many other feats of love.

But Christians also own a poor reputation for numerous bad habits.

Here are six things we must stop doing:

These are not the habits that may immediately spring to mind such as drinking smoking partying etc which are obviously hindrances. These are habits Christians get into that put the unbelievers off even listening to us and harm our unity with the rest of the Body of Christ.

1. The grave clothes of bad habits.

A. Been judgemental.

One of the few sins Jesus repeatedly warns His followers not to do is be judgmental. Despite this, many Christians mistakenly assume that withholding judgment is a form of accepting, condoning and even affirming sin. But judgment from Christians doesn't determine whether a particular belief, action or lifestyle is either wrong or righteous.

B. Predicting the Future.

The Gospel message of Christ's love is often overshadowed by misguided Christians who make predictions and "prophecies" about political affairs, planetary alignments, environmental phenomena, current events, natural disasters, the Antichrist, End Times and the Apocalypse.



1. The grave clothes of bad habits.

C. Overcomplicating the Love of Jesus. There comes a point, unfortunately, in the Christian journey when many start to feel bored, unfulfilled and dissatisfied with the unglamorous task of loving others. It's very hard work to follow Jesus. It requires sacrifice, humility, service, patience, forgiveness and lots of love. It can be tempting—and much easier—to focus on specific parts of the Bible that don't require as much endurance, are more flashy, will draw more attention and will instill a greater sense of excitement.

So some of us create a “Christian” platform that becomes our passion. A political agenda, social cause, moral practice or specific theological belief can become central to our faith—overtaking Jesus' command to love others as yourself. Thus, we get people who will practically fight to the death over things such as Calvinism, infant baptism and various other causes and doctrines.

In and of themselves these things aren't necessarily bad—everyone has their own convictions about theological issues—but when things are prioritized above Christ's love, it leads to idolization.

1. The grave clothes of bad habits.

D. Posting Garbage on Social Media.

The clickbait links, offensive political memes, self-righteous condemnations of others, bitter theological rants, and out-of-context Bible excerpts cause more harm than good.

Posting vitriolic, superficial, and offensive content on our Facebook feeds and Twitter accounts doesn't glorify God. Before posting anything, stop and think: "Is this true, helpful, inspiring, necessary and kind?"

- ULTIMATELY, JESUS IS WHAT CHRISTIANITY IS ALL ABOUT, NOT POLITICAL PLATFORMS, DOCTRINAL DISAGREEMENTS, ONLINE RELIGIOUS COMMENTARY OR OMINOUS PROPHECIES.
- This rule has saved me from putting lots of foolish and reactionary content online, and it would do all Christians a world of good to carefully reflect on whether their social commentary is motivated by the love of Christ.

1. The grave clothes of bad habits.

E. Being Hypocritical.

It's easy to talk about God, argue theological issues and post about faith issues on all sorts of communication platforms.

But in order to follow Christ, we are required to actually put our words into actions. As the old adage goes, we must practice what we preach. Unfortunately, too many Christians *talk* about Christ's love without actually *being* loving. Meanwhile, the rest of world witnesses this obvious contradiction and simply stops listening.

F. Being Closed-Minded.

The problems listed above are often caused by being closed-minded—not considering, acknowledging or even dialoguing with the infinite amount of diverse factors that exist beyond our own limited experiences.

We may no longer burn at the stake those whose doctrines differ from us, but we assassinate them verbally and we need to guard against setting ourselves up as all knowing.

2. The grave clothes of dead works.

Hebrews 6:1-3.

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Hebrews 9:13-14.

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Dead works are works that are done not because we love the Lord and are compelled by this love to serve Him, but they are done out of a sense of fear thinking it is needed to justify us, or done out of pride or some other impure motive.

2. The grave clothes of dead works.

Giving and suffering can be dead works.

1 Corinthians 13:3.

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Fasting can be dead works.

Isaiah 58:2-3.

They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. Why have we fasted, they say, and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?



2. The grave clothes of dead works.

Going to Church meetings, praying & singing can be dead works.

Isaiah 1:12-15.

When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me.

New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations, I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.

Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening.



3. The grave clothes of lust and pleasures.

2 Peter 2:18-21.

For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity for people are slaves to whatever has mastered them. If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.



3. The grave clothes of lust and pleasures.

The word liberated means something totally opposite to the world.

Liberate: (Collins dictionary)

Free from rigid social conventions especially in sexual behaviour.

So the person the world says is liberated, God says is in bondage.

Titus 3:3.

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures, We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us..



4. The grave clothes of legalism.

Romans 7:4-6.

So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.



4. The grave clothes of legalism.

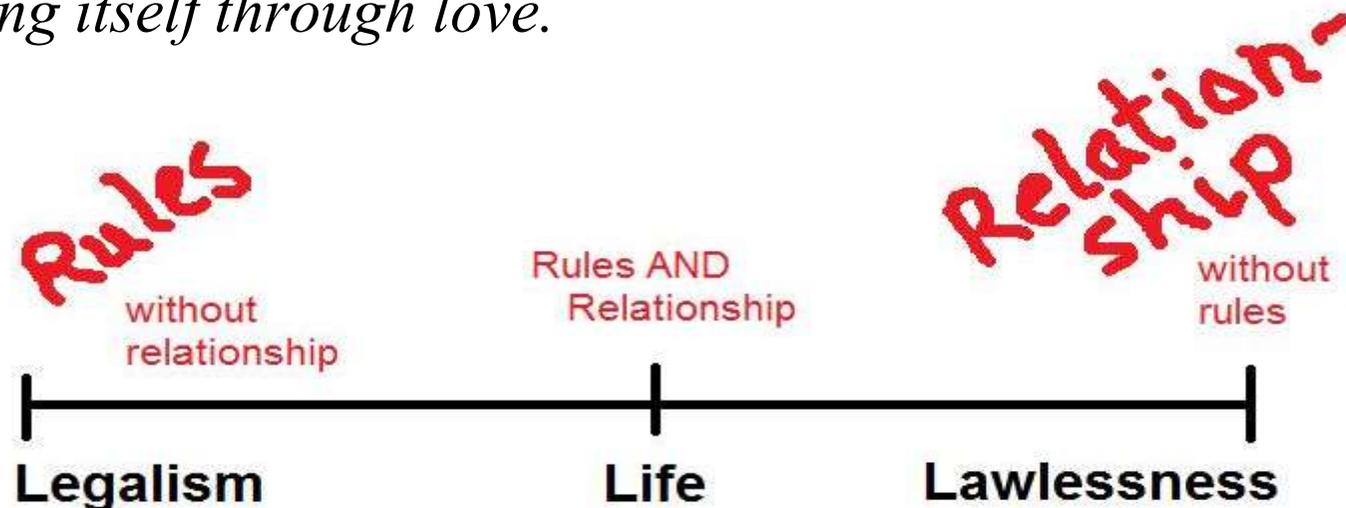
Galatians 5:1-6.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.....

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.



4. The grave clothes of legalism.

Romans 14:1-23.

Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarrelling over disputable matters. One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

4. The grave clothes of legalism.

Romans 14:1-23 (continued)

For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God. So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love.

4. The grave clothes of legalism.

Romans 14:1-23 (continued)

Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall. So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

4. The grave clothes of legalism.

Colossians 2:16-23.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you.

Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch! These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings.

Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

5. The grave clothes of unforgiveness.

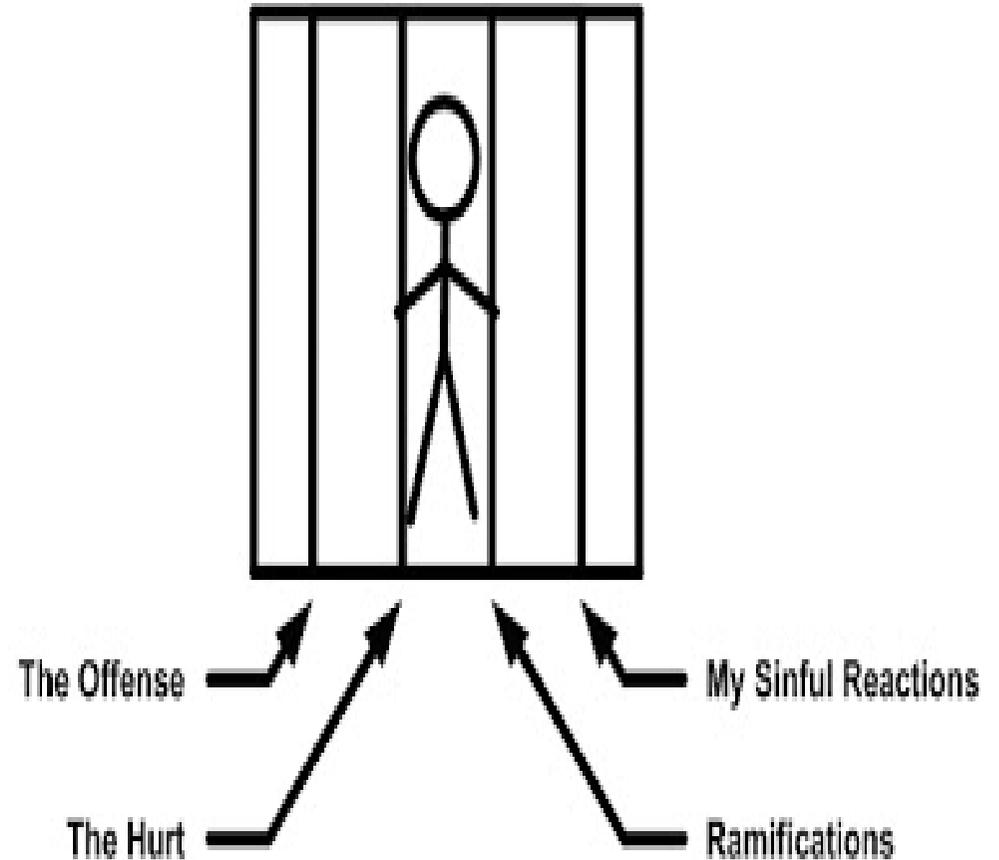
Matthew 18:32-35.

Then the master called the servant in. You wicked servant, he said, I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?

In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

Prison of Unforgiveness



5. The grave clothes of unforgiveness.

Acts 8:9-13,18-24.

Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, This man is rightly called the Great Power of God. They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw..... When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles hands, he offered them money and said, Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit. Peter answered: May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin. Then Simon answered, Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.

6. The grave clothes of tradition.

Mark 7:5.

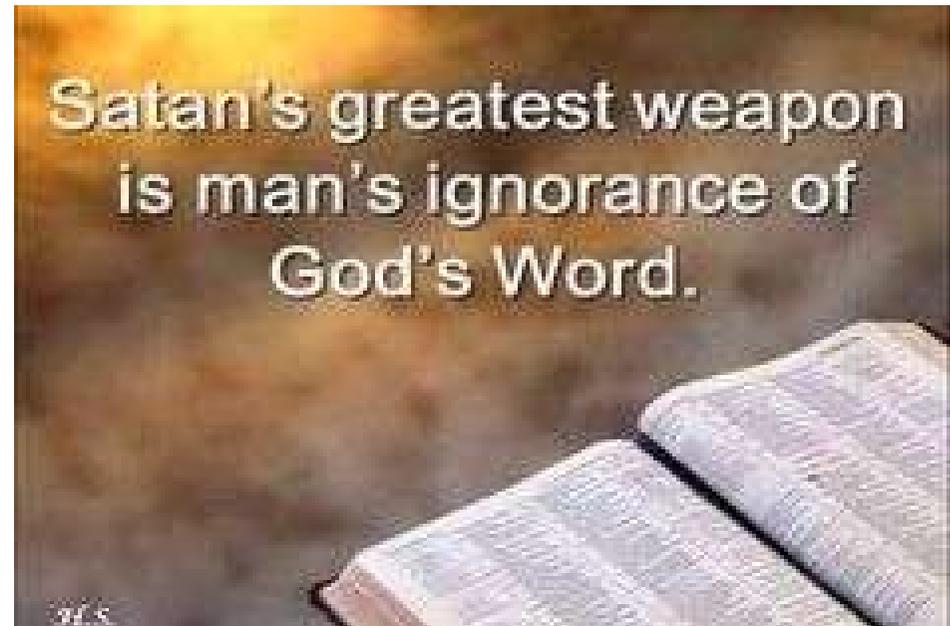
So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?

He replied, Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

“These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.”

You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.

And he continued, You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!



6. The grave clothes of tradition.

Colossians 2:8.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

John 8:31-36.

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

They answered him, We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free? Jesus replied, Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.



Audio (WMA) and text (PDF) ministry

FREE MINISTRY DOWNLOADS



AUTHOR: Ken Paynter

- ❑ For more ministry downloads visit:
<http://www.agfbrakpan.co.za/ministry-archives.aspx>
- ❑ For more ministry downloads by Ken Paynter visit:
<http://www.agfbrakpan.co.za/ministry-archives.aspx?speaker=Ken%20Paynter>

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

- ❑ NOTE 1: Biblical illustrations by Jim Padgett, courtesy of <http://sweetpublishing.com>
- ❑ Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the NIV:
 - THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™
Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
- ❑ Scripture quotations taken from the NASB:
 - New American Standard Bible®,
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977,
1995 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission. (<http://www.Lockman.org>)