



St Barnabas Cray

From Old Self to New in Christ

Weekly Devotional Journey

Monday - A Life Before and a Life After

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24 NIV)

Devotional Thought

There is something profoundly honest about the way Paul opens his appeal to the Ephesians. He does not pretend that life before Christ was simply a blank page, nor does he catastrophise it into something unrecognisable. He simply acknowledges the truth: there was a life before, and now there is a life after. And the difference is not merely cosmetic — it goes all the way down to the attitudes of our minds, the hidden orientations of our hearts.

Paul's language is wonderfully concrete. He speaks of clothing — of taking off and putting on. The old self is not destroyed overnight; it must be actively, intentionally removed. And the new self must be deliberately chosen, like putting on fresh garments each morning. This is not a one-time event but a daily, ongoing discipline of the soul.

What makes the old self so tenacious? Paul says it is being corrupted by its deceitful desires. The word 'deceitful' is important here. The old way of living does not always announce itself as harmful. It whispers that putting yourself first is simply being sensible. It suggests that old habits are harmless. It tells us that the new life can wait until tomorrow. Deception is subtle precisely because it feels reasonable.

But the gospel calls us to something different — to a life shaped not by what feels natural to our old instincts, but by what is true about who we are in Christ. We have been created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. That is an astonishing statement. The new self is not a slightly improved version of the old one. It is a person being remade in the very image of God.

This is why the Christian life is never merely about behaviour modification. It begins in the mind — in the attitudes, the assumptions, the deep-seated ways we see ourselves, others, and the world. The renewal Paul describes starts there, and works its way outward into every corner of our lives.

Reflection Question

When you consider the 'old self' that Paul describes — the habits, attitudes, and priorities that existed before or outside of Christ — which aspects of it do you still find yourself reaching for, even now?

From Sunday's Sermon

"Without Christ as the centre, our priorities will have been different. The things we wanted to do will have been different. Some of them will have been very good — we might have cared for our families and our friends — but on the whole, perhaps our old self is liable to put number one first. And if you're anything like me, the new self still does that, at least some of the time."

Today's Application

Begin this week with a moment of honest self-examination. Find a quiet space — perhaps first thing this morning or during a lunch break — and ask yourself: what are the 'old clothes' I most frequently reach for? Perhaps it is a tendency to prioritise your own comfort over the needs of others. Perhaps it is a habit of anxiety, or a pattern of speaking before you listen, or a quiet selfishness in how you spend your time and money.

Write down one or two specific attitudes or behaviours that you recognise as belonging to the old self. Then, beside each one, write what the corresponding 'new self' response might look like. If the old self reaches for resentment, the new self chooses to forgive. If the old self withdraws from community, the new self leans in. Make this concrete and personal. Then, at the end of each day this week, return briefly to what you have written and notice where God has been at work in you.

Morning Prayer

Gracious Father, thank you that you do not leave us as we are. Thank you that in Jesus you have shown us what a fully human life, lived entirely for you, looks like. As I begin this week, I acknowledge honestly that the old self is not yet fully behind me. There are attitudes and desires that still pull at me, and I do not always resist them well. But I come to you not in shame, but in hope — because you are the one who makes all things new. Renew the attitudes of my mind today. Help me to notice where I am reaching for the old, and to choose the new instead. I ask this in the name of Jesus, who is making me new. Amen.

Evening Devotion

Noticing the Old, Choosing the New

Evening Reflection

As this day draws to a close, it is worth pausing to notice where the old self made its presence felt. Not to condemn yourself — Paul's letter is not a catalogue of shame — but to become more aware of the patterns that still shape you, so that grace can work more deeply.

Perhaps today you found yourself slipping into a familiar habit of self-centredness, or impatience, or a quiet withdrawal from someone who needed your attention. Perhaps you noticed the pull of an old priority reasserting itself. Or perhaps — and this is worth celebrating — you caught yourself choosing differently. You noticed the old instinct and, by God's grace, you chose the new.

The Christian life is not about achieving perfection by Friday. It is about becoming, slowly and faithfully, more like the person God created you to be. Every small choice in the direction of the new self is a genuine act of discipleship. Paul's language of putting on and taking off suggests that this is a practice — something we do again and again, becoming more fluent in it over time. Tonight, rest in the knowledge that God is patient with you, and that his work in you is not finished.

Evening Reflection

Where did you notice the old self today, and where — even in a small way — did you find yourself choosing the new?

Evening Prayer

Lord, as this day ends, I bring you what I have seen in myself — the moments I fell short and the moments your grace carried me. Thank you that you are not finished with me. Renew my mind as I sleep, and give me fresh grace to choose the new tomorrow. Amen.

Tuesday - The Many Ways We Come to Know Him

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.
(Ephesians 4:21 NIV)

Devotional Thought

One of the most liberating things in the Christian life is the recognition that there is no single, prescribed route into faith. Paul reminds the Ephesians that they heard of Christ and were taught in him — but the manner of that hearing and teaching varied enormously from person to person. Some had encountered Paul himself, preaching with urgency in the synagogue or the marketplace. Others had heard from a neighbour, a family member, a friend. The point is not the pathway but the destination: they had come to know the truth that is in Jesus.

This matters enormously for how we hold our own stories of faith. For some people, there is a clear and memorable moment of conversion — a date, a place, a prayer, a sudden and unmistakable turning. And that is a precious thing, to be treasured and returned to in times of doubt. But for many others, the journey into faith has been more gradual, more like a slow dawning than a sudden sunrise. They were raised in a home where Jesus was spoken of and prayed to, where the rhythms of church and Scripture shaped their earliest memories. They cannot point to a single moment of decision, but they can trace a lifetime of deepening.

Neither story is superior. Both are genuine works of God. The God who can stop a man in his tracks on the road to Damascus is equally the God who works quietly and persistently through faithful parents, patient teachers, and a community of believers over many years. What matters is not the drama of the beginning but the reality of the relationship.

Perhaps today you need to give yourself permission to honour your own story — however it has unfolded. Your path to Christ is not less valid because it lacked a single decisive moment. Or perhaps you need to give thanks afresh for the clarity of that moment when everything changed. Either way, the truth that is in Jesus is the same, and it is yours.

Reflection Question

How has your own journey into faith unfolded — and have you ever felt that your story was somehow less valid because it did not follow a particular pattern? What might it mean to receive your story as a gift from God?

From Sunday's Sermon

"You may be one of those really fortunate people who was brought up in the atmosphere of the new life, who was brought up by parents who were already showing you the way of Jesus and encouraging you to follow it. So you don't know a time when that sort of decisive change was made. But you may know that there were times in your childhood or your adolescence or your adulthood when a different penny dropped and you were able to say, ah, now I know in a new way that the things that I've always heard about, things I've always been part of, I want to take for myself."

Today's Application

Today, take some time to reflect on and, if possible, write out the story of your own journey to faith. Do not worry about whether it is dramatic or quiet, sudden or gradual. Simply trace the threads — the people, the moments, the Scriptures, the circumstances — through which God has drawn you to himself.

If you have never done this before, it can be a deeply formative exercise. You may be surprised by what you notice — the persistence of God's presence across years you had not thought of as particularly spiritual. If you have done this before, revisit it with fresh eyes. Are there chapters of your story you have undervalued or overlooked?

Then consider: is there someone in your life whose faith story is very different from yours? Perhaps someone who came to faith dramatically, or someone who has grown up in the church all their life. Ask God to give you genuine appreciation for the diversity of ways he draws people to himself, and let that appreciation shape how you speak about faith with others this week.

Morning Prayer

Father, thank you that you are not limited to one way of reaching people. Thank you that your grace is creative and persistent, working through the dramatic and the quiet, the sudden and the slow. Thank you for the particular path by which you have brought me to know the truth that is in Jesus. Help me to honour my story and to trust that you have been present in every chapter of it. And help me to hold space for others whose journeys look very different from mine. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Devotion**Every Penny That Has Dropped****Evening Reflection**

Looking back over your day, and perhaps further back over your life, can you trace the moments when, as was said so beautifully, 'a different penny dropped'? Those moments of recognition — sometimes quiet, sometimes startling — when something you had heard before suddenly became real, personal, and alive.

Faith is rarely static. Even for those who have walked with Christ for many years, there are seasons of deeper seeing, of understanding something afresh, of receiving a truth that was always there but is now, somehow, more truly your own. This is not weakness of faith — it is growth. It is the renewing of the mind that Paul describes, happening not in a single moment but across a lifetime of hearing, learning, and responding.

Tonight, give thanks for the people God has used in your journey — the teachers, the friends, the authors, the communities. And give thanks that God is not finished with you yet. There are more pennies still to drop, more depths of the truth in Jesus still to be discovered. That is not a cause for anxiety but for quiet, expectant joy.

Evening Reflection

As you look back over your journey of faith, who are the people or moments you are most grateful for — and have you ever thanked God for them?

Evening Prayer

Lord, thank you for the long, patient work of grace in my life. Thank you for every person and moment you have used to draw me closer to yourself. As I rest tonight, I give you my story — all of it — and trust that you are still writing it. Amen.

Wednesday - We Cannot Be 'We' Alone

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body — whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13 NIV)

Devotional Thought

There is a temptation in our highly individualised culture to treat the Christian life as a purely personal affair — a private relationship between the soul and God, requiring little more than a Bible, a quiet corner, and a sincere heart. And while that quiet, personal dimension of faith is genuinely precious, it is only ever half the picture. Paul's letters, as we have been reminded, were written not to isolated individuals but to communities — to churches, to groups of believers learning together what it means to follow Jesus.

The implications of this are far-reaching. When Paul calls the Ephesians to put off the old self and put on the new, he is speaking to them together. The new self that is created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness is not merely a personal achievement — it is a communal reality. The church, the body of Christ, is meant to display together what no individual believer could display alone.

This is why the habit of gathering — of coming to church, of sharing life with other Christians — is not optional for the serious disciple. It is not merely a nice supplement to personal faith. It is the very context in which the new self is formed, tested, and expressed. We learn patience by being with people who try our patience. We learn generosity by being part of a community that gives. We learn forgiveness by having to forgive people we know well enough to be genuinely hurt by.

And there is something else: the body of Christ has a corporate witness in the world that no individual can replicate. When a community of believers lives out the new self together — when they are genuinely kind, genuinely humble, genuinely united across their differences — the watching world sees something that cannot be explained merely by good intentions or social conditioning. It sees the life of God made visible. That is the calling of the church, and it is a calling we can only answer together.

Reflection Question

In what ways might you be living your Christian life too independently — relying on personal faith while keeping a degree of distance from genuine, committed community? What would it look like to lean in more fully?

From Sunday's Sermon

"I can't be 'we' on my own. I can't really be the body of Christ on my own. I have to be with other people, and with those other people we're seeking to live out the new self."

Today's Application

This week, take one concrete step towards deeper investment in your Christian community. This might look different depending on your circumstances. If you have been attending church regularly but keeping people at arm's length, consider introducing yourself to someone you do not know well, or accepting an invitation you might normally decline. If you have been sporadic in your attendance, commit to a specific pattern of gathering for the coming month. If you are already well connected, ask yourself: is there someone on the edges of your community who needs to be drawn in? A new face, a quiet person, someone who has been absent?

Also, reflect on this: are there ways in which your church community, as a whole, needs to 'put off' old patterns and 'put on' new ones? This is a harder question, but it is the one Paul was asking. Communities, like individuals, can become set in their ways. Pray for your church today — not just for individuals within it, but for the body as a whole, that it might be renewed in its collective mind and witness.

Morning Prayer

Lord Jesus, you did not come to gather isolated individuals but to build a community — a body, a family, a people. Forgive me for the ways I have kept my faith too private, too self-contained. Help me to embrace the gift and the challenge of belonging to your church. Teach me what I cannot learn alone. Form in me what can only be formed in community. And use us together — imperfect and still-becoming as we are — to make your life visible in the world around us. Amen.

Evening Devotion

The Gift of Being Together

Evening Reflection

As the day winds down, it is worth pausing to give thanks for the people God has placed around you in the body of Christ. Community is not always easy. People are complicated, churches are imperfect, and the very closeness that makes Christian community formative also makes it possible to be hurt, disappointed, or misunderstood within it.

And yet — the body of Christ is one of God's greatest gifts to us. It is in community that we are seen and known, that we are prayed for by name, that we are held accountable in love, and that we discover gifts and graces we did not know we possessed. The new self is not formed in isolation. It is formed in the friction and the warmth, the challenge and the encouragement, of life shared with other followers of Jesus.

Tonight, think of two or three people in your church community who have shaped you, encouraged you, or simply been present with you. Give thanks for them. And then think of one person who might need you to be that kind of presence for them this week.

Evening Reflection

Who in your Christian community has been a particular gift to you — and how might God be calling you to be that kind of gift to someone else?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you for the body of Christ — for its warmth, its challenge, and its witness. Thank you for the people who have walked alongside me. Help me to be, for someone else, the kind of companion in faith that I have been grateful to receive. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Thursday - The God Who Prays for You

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:9-10 NIV)

Devotional Thought

There is something quietly extraordinary about the picture Paul paints in his letter to the Colossians. He has never visited this church. He does not know most of them personally. And yet, from the day he heard about them, he has not stopped praying for them. He carries them before God, interceding for their growth, their wisdom, their fruitfulness, their endurance.

This is not merely an admirable pastoral habit. It is a window into the very nature of the Christian life. Prayer — specifically, intercession for one another — is one of the primary ways in which the body of Christ sustains itself. Paul's prayers for the Colossians are an expression of the truth that we are bound together in Christ, that what happens to them matters to him, and that the growth of their faith is something he actively participates in through his prayers.

But there is something even more profound here. Behind Paul's intercession stands the intercession of Christ himself. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus 'always lives to intercede' for those who come to God through him (Hebrews 7:25). The God who calls us to the new life is also the God who prays for us as we try to live it. We are not left to struggle alone with the demands of discipleship. The risen Christ is, at this very moment, interceding for you — for your growth, your faithfulness, your renewal.

And what does Paul pray for? Not comfort, not success, not the removal of difficulty — but that they may be filled with the knowledge of God's will, that they may live a life worthy of the Lord, that they may bear fruit in every good work, and that they may grow in the knowledge of God. These are the things that matter most. These are the prayers worth praying for yourself and for one another.

Reflection Question

When you pray for other people, what do you most often ask for on their behalf? How might Paul's prayers in Colossians reshape what you pray for the people you love?

From Sunday's Sermon

"Paul prays for the Colossians that God will be at work amongst them — that God will continue to help them to have their minds renewed, that God will continue to help them to take off the old, to turn their back away from what he sometimes calls darkness or flesh, and look instead to the new, to the light, to the life of the Spirit."

Today's Application

Today, take Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9-10 and pray it, slowly and deliberately, for three specific people in your life. They might be family members, friends, fellow church members, or colleagues. As you pray, personalise the words — insert their names, and let the prayer become genuinely yours for them.

Then consider: is there someone in your life who you know is praying for you regularly? Have you ever thanked them? A brief message or conversation acknowledging the gift of their intercession can be a profound encouragement — both to them and to you.

Finally, reflect on your own prayer life. Is it primarily focused on asking God to change circumstances, or does it include asking God to change and form people — including yourself? Paul's prayers are almost entirely focused on inner formation: wisdom, understanding, fruitfulness, growth. Let that shape how you pray today and throughout this week.

Morning Prayer

Lord, I am humbled and grateful that you do not simply set me on the path of the new life and leave me to manage alone. Thank you that your Son intercedes for me even now. Thank you for the people who pray for me by name. Teach me to pray as Paul prayed — not merely for the relief of difficulty, but for the deep formation of souls. Give me a heart that carries others before you in prayer, and help me to trust that you are at work in ways I cannot always see. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Devotion

Held in Prayer

Evening Reflection

There is a particular kind of rest that comes from knowing you are being prayed for. Not because prayer is a magic charm that removes all difficulty, but because it is a reminder that you are not navigating this life alone. Someone — perhaps several people — has carried your name before the throne of God today. And Christ himself has interceded for you.

As you settle into this evening, let that truth sink in. You are known. You are held. The God who calls you to the demanding, beautiful, daily work of putting on the new self is the same God who sustains you in that work through prayer — his own and that of his people.

Paul's prayer for the Colossians was that they would grow in the knowledge of God. Not merely knowledge about God — information, doctrine, facts — but the kind of deep, relational, experiential knowledge that comes from walking closely with someone over time. That is what God desires for you. And that desire is itself the answer to every prayer for your growth.

Evening Reflection

As you look back on today, where did you sense God sustaining you — perhaps in a way you only recognise now, in the quiet of the evening?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you that I am held in your prayers and in the prayers of your people. As I rest tonight, help me to trust that you are at work in me even when I am not aware of it. Grow me in the knowledge of you. Amen.

Friday - The Father Running to Meet Us

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:11-14 NIV)

Devotional Thought

The Christian life, as Paul describes it, is not a sprint. It is a long journey, and it requires something that our culture is not particularly good at cultivating: endurance and patience. The process of putting off the old and putting on the new is not completed in a week, or a year, or even a decade. It is the work of a lifetime, and it will not be finished until we see Christ face to face.

This is why Paul prays not just for wisdom and fruitfulness but for endurance and patience — and crucially, for joyful endurance. Not gritted-teeth, white-knuckled perseverance, but a patient, joyful faithfulness that comes from knowing who holds the future and what that future contains. The inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light is not a vague spiritual reward — it is the fullness of life with God, the completion of everything the new self has been reaching towards.

But what about the times when the path has meandered? What about the seasons when the old self reasserted itself, when choices were made that led away from the light rather than towards it? Here, the sermon brings us to one of the most beautiful images in all of Scripture: the father of the prodigal son, standing at the road's end with arms already open, ready not merely to forgive but to celebrate.

This is the God we follow. Not a reluctant forgiver who tolerates our return, but a Father who runs to meet us. Not once — not only at the beginning of our journey — but again and again, as many times as we need to come home. The weekly confession in our worship is not a ritual of shame. It is a regular, structured act of coming home, of turning from the old to the new, of receiving the embrace of a Father who has been watching for us.

Endurance and patience are possible because the one who calls us to them is also the one who forgives us when we fail, restores us when we wander, and strengthens us to begin again. That is not a reason for complacency. It is a reason for deep, settled, joyful hope.

Reflection Question

Is there an area of your life where you have been wandering — where the old path has reasserted itself and you have been reluctant to turn back? What would it mean, today, to take a step towards home?

From Sunday's Sermon

"Remember the story which we call the story of the Prodigal Son — when he suddenly realised what a mess he was making, he went home. And what was his father doing? Standing there with his arms open, ready to have a feast because he'd come back. And that's a picture of the way God receives us, not just the first time, but again and again when we need to be brought back to him."

Today's Application

As you come to the end of this devotional week, take stock of the journey you have been on. Where has God been at work in you? Where have you grown, even slightly, in the attitudes of your mind? And where do you need to come home — to turn from an old pattern and receive again the grace that is always waiting?

If there is a specific area of wandering — a relationship that needs repair, a habit that needs to be surrendered, an attitude that has hardened — name it before God today. Do not wait for a more convenient moment. The Father is already at the road's end, watching for you.

Then, as an act of joyful gratitude, do something this weekend to invest in your community of faith. Attend worship with a full and open heart. Pray for your church — not just the individuals you know, but the body as a whole, that it may put off what is old and unhelpful and put on the new directions God is calling it towards. Bring your whole self — your story, your struggles, your hope — into the life of the community that needs you, and that you need.

Morning Prayer

Father, thank you that you are the God who runs to meet us. Thank you that your arms are open not just at the beginning of the journey but at every point along it — including the moments when I have wandered and need to come home. Give me the endurance and patience I need to keep walking in the new life. Give me the joy that comes from knowing my inheritance is secure in Christ. And when I stumble — as I will — remind me that you are already watching for me, already moving towards me, already preparing the welcome. I receive your grace today, with gratitude and wonder. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Devotion

The Journey Continues

Evening Reflection

As this week draws to a close, it is worth pausing to notice how far you have come — not just this week, but across the whole of your journey with Christ. The language of putting off and putting on, of old and new, of darkness and light, is not the language of a single dramatic moment but of a whole life being slowly, faithfully transformed.

You are not the finished article. Neither is your church. Neither, for that matter, was the church at Ephesus or Colossae, which is precisely why Paul was writing to them. But God is at work — in you, through you, and around you — and his work is good. He has rescued you from the dominion of darkness and brought you into the kingdom of the Son he loves. That is not a future promise only; it is a present reality. You are already in the kingdom of light, even as you are still learning to live fully within it.

Rest in that tonight. The journey is not over, but you are not walking it alone. The God who began a good work in you is faithful to complete it. And the Father is always, always at the road's end — arms open, feast prepared, ready to welcome you home.

Evening Reflection

As you reflect on this week's devotional journey, what is the one thing you want to carry forward — the truth, the challenge, or the grace that has meant most to you?

Evening Prayer

Lord, thank you for this week — for the light you have shed, the grace you have given, and the work you have begun and continued in me. I am yours. Keep me walking in the new life, and bring me home whenever I wander. To you be all the glory. Amen.