

## A New Life

I trust that there might be one or two of us here who given the opportunity would make a few changes regarding the life we've lived and the consequences that have resulted from certain decisions we've made. Unfortunately there's no way to do that, but there is a way to have a new life in which the chances of making the same mistakes in the future will be significantly minimized.

When a person places their faith in Jesus Christ, they walk in newness of life. The Greek word used for "walk" in Romans 6:4 means "daily spiritual conduct." So the believer now has a new way of living each day, a way of living that is capable of goodness and joy; rather than selfishness and unhappiness. Paul affirms this reality in Romans 6:5:

*Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised as he was.*

Having been joined together with Christ in His death through our faith in what He did, we were therefore still joined with Him when He rose from the grave, and we are joined to Him now through the Holy Spirit, and we will join Him personally in Heaven when we die, and we will then spend eternity with Him in Heaven. There need be no fear of death if you're a believer because the instant you die you'll be in Heaven with Jesus. What kind of people are we when we become one with Christ in our salvation? Before we answer that, let's look at Ephesians 2:6-10:

*For **God raised us from the dead along with Christ**, and we are seated with him in the heavenly realms—all because we are one with Christ Jesus.*

*7 And so God can always point to us as examples of the incredible wealth of his favor and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us through Christ Jesus.*

*8 **God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.***

*9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.*

*10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us **anew** in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

**YOU DON'T GET SAVED BY DOING GOOD WORKS, YOU GET SAVED TO DO GOOD WORKS.** It's a marvelous concept. A Christian is a brand new person. You become something you never were before. It's not something that's been added, it's a complete transformation. Becoming a Christian is not getting something new. Becoming a Christian is to become someone new. It means **we have died to sin** in our new nature. Sin is no longer the dominant power in our lives. If you consider yourself a Christian and don't feel that you're different than what you once were, you might want to examine yourself to be certain your commitment to Jesus was real. That doesn't mean that you're not saved if you're still sinning, but that sin should be causing you a great deal of remorse and guilt if

you know you're not doing all that you can to eliminate it through the power God makes available to you.

The name John Newton may be familiar to some of you. After being educated in England, John ran away to sea early in his life and eventually ended up in Africa. In kind of a role reversal he was sold as a slave to a black woman. He lived on the crumbs from her table and yams that he dug from the ground at night. His clothing consisted of a single shirt which he washed periodically in the ocean. When he finally escaped he went to the natives and lived very much like an animal. It seems hard to believe that a civilized and educated man like John Newton could have sunk to such a low level. But the power of God reached down to John Newton in that situation through a missionary in Africa. Perhaps John Newton cried out to God in despair as many of us do, and God responded by putting him in touch with this missionary in Africa.

John eventually became a sea captain and later on in his life he became an ordained minister. He wrote many marvelous hymns, the most famous probably is "*Amazing Grace*." He became the pastor of a church in London and there is still an epitaph in that church yard where John was the pastor, an epitaph which John wrote himself. It reads as follows:

*"Sacred to the memory of John Newton. Once a libertine (one who lives an unrestrained immoral life) and a blasphemer and slave of slaves in Africa; but renewed, purified, pardoned and appointed to preach the Gospel which he had labored at one time to destroy."*

Are you having a hard time of it in your life? I bet you're probably not in as bad a way as John Newton was at the lowest point in his life. And even if you are, look what happened to him when he placed his complete faith and trust in Christ. What changes a life like that? How does it happen that the apostle Paul can himself say in 1 Timothy 1:12-17:

*How thankful I am to Christ Jesus our Lord for considering me trustworthy and appointing me to serve him,*

*13 even though I used to scoff at the name of Christ. I hunted down his people, harming them in every way I could. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief.*

*14 Oh, how kind and gracious the Lord was! He filled me completely with faith and the love of Christ Jesus.*

*15 This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: **CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS**—and I was the worst of them all.*

*16 But that is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.*

*17 Glory and honor to God forever and ever. He is the eternal King, the*

*unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen.*

Paul is speaking here of how Christ used him as an example. Paul was a sinner first class. He was a mass murderer of Christians and committed any number of vile sins. Yet in spite of all that Paul had been, Christ placed him in the ministry just as he did John Newton, and just as he's done with me, and yes you could be next. It doesn't matter what you've been like or what you've done in the past, once you become a new creation in Christ, Christ can use you to do things you never before thought yourself capable of accomplishing. If you're not familiar with the verse we're about to give you, I would encourage you to copy it and place it on your bathroom mirror for at least a few weeks so that you can be reminded of it several times each day. It comes from Galatians 2:16-20:

*We become right with God, not by doing what the law commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be accepted by God because of our faith in Christ—and not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be saved by obeying the law.” 17 But what if we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ and then find out that we are still sinners? Has Christ led us into sin? Of course not! 18 Rather, I make myself guilty if I rebuild the old system I already tore down. 19 For when I tried to keep the law, I realized I could never earn God’s approval. So I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ. 20 **I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.***

As we move on now to Romans 6:6,7, Paul tells us how our body of sin is destroyed:

*Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.  
7 For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.*

In verse 6 we see that our old self was crucified with Christ. That means that our old self is dead, it's not just wounded. Ephesians 4:17-32 tells us:

*With the Lord’s authority let me say this: Live no longer as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused.  
18 Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him.  
19 They don’t care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed.  
20 But that isn’t what you were taught when you learned about Christ.  
21 Since you have heard all about him and have learned the truth that is*

*in Jesus,*

**22 throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception.**

*23 Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes.*

**24 You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness—righteous, holy, and true.**

*25 So put away all falsehood and "tell your neighbor the truth" because we belong to each other.*

**26 And "don't sin by letting anger gain control over you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry,  
27 for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil.**

*28 If you are a thief, stop stealing. Begin using your hands for honest work, and then give generously to others in need.*

*29 Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.*

*30 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he is the one who has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.*

**31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior.**

*32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

The old self is your former manner of life, your former way of living. **The new self is like Jesus** according to 2 Corinthians 5:14-20:

*Whatever we do, it is because Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for everyone, we also believe that **we have all died to the old life we used to live.***

*15 He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will **no longer live to please themselves.** Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them.*

*16 So we have stopped evaluating others by what the world thinks about them. Once I mistakenly thought of Christ that way, as though he were merely a human being. How differently I think about him now!*

**17 What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!**

*18 All this newness of life is from God, who brought us back to himself through what Christ did. And God has given us the task of reconciling people to him.*

*19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer*

*counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others.*

*20 We are Christ's ambassadors, and God is using us to speak to you. We urge you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you, "**BE RECONCILED TO GOD!**"*

We're a new creation that is not yet perfect. There is a radical difference that should be noticed by our circle of acquaintances and family as well as new people we meet. So when someone comes along claiming to be a Christian and they gossip, take advantage of others for their own personal gain, act as if life is all about them, are selective in who they want in their church, are accepting of beliefs that are forbidden in scripture, such as homosexuality and abortion, these people do not exhibit the qualities of a life that has been joined with Christ. Where there is no evidence of such a union, there is very likely no salvation. I'm quite concerned that this condition is altogether too prevalent in most churches today. I would even go so far as to suggest that most people never hear the message of salvation in the churches they attend.

That's one reason that we started Village Church. The truth of the Gospel should be taught somewhere in the message each week. Pastors need to have the courage to teach the truth even though it might not be popular with their congregations.

Now let's take a close look at the phrase in Romans 6:6 that says "*Our body of sin is done away with.*" Before a person is saved their body is totally controlled by the sinful nature. So because of our union in Christ's death, the body of the believer is no longer in the possession of sin. It is no longer controlled and dominated by sin according to 1 Corinthians 6:19,20:

*Don't you know that your body is **the temple of the Holy Spirit**, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, 20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.*

Your body is no longer under the dominion of sin, so you don't have to yield to it. You can successfully resist it by asking the Holy Spirit who now lives in you for help. The dominant rule of sin over the body is broken. Let's jump ahead a few verses to Romans 6:16:

*Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval.*

When you ask Christ into your life, you get a new king and master. Jesus replaces Satan and this allows you to choose righteousness instead of self-will. In your own strength this is impossible but by yielding to the Holy Spirit--that is, letting the Holy Spirit control you instead of your own thoughts and desires, you can then choose to walk God's way. Galatians 5:24 does a good job of summarizing all of this:

*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.*

The sinful nature has been killed in terms of its dominance, not necessarily in terms of its presence. A man by the name of Martin Jones came up with the following illustration to which I've added my own personal touch.

There were two fields with a little road running down the middle of them and separating them. All of his life, before he knew Christ, this man named Ron lived in the field on the south side of the road. This field was ruled by Satan, and Ron served this master faithfully. He allowed Satan to dominate him, dictate to him, and tell him what to do. His humanness, his flesh, and his body were therefore used for sin.

And then one day, by the grace of God, someone called to him from the field on the north side of the road, the field that was under the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore controlled by righteousness and holiness which reflected the nature of the field's Ruler. Again, by the grace of God, Ron responded to the call and crossed over to the other field with Satan hanging on to his coattails trying to pull him back. But when he entered the new field, Satan had to reluctantly let go as Ron was transformed, no longer wanting to serve Satan but Christ.

But Satan never gives up easily and at various times Ron would hear Satan calling to him from across the road, telling him how much pleasure he would have if he only would come back to Satan's field. And although Ron was no longer under Satan's dominion, Satan in his own clever and devious way made Ron think that maybe it would be fun to just visit Satan's field occasionally for a good time. But whenever he did that, he realized immediately the terrible mistake he had made and rushed back to the field of His Lord and Savior, Jesus. After a while, although he was still tempted to listen to Satan's call, Ron learned that Satan didn't care a lick about him and all that he wanted to do was snatch people away from Christ so he could destroy them and weaken the Kingdom of God. So when Ron was tempted again by Satan's call, He called out to his Lord Jesus and Jesus told him just how to resist the temptation.

Although sin no longer dominates us as Christians, we can fall victim to that very thing



from which we have been delivered. Then as Paul moves on to Romans 6:8-10, we find that:

*Since we died with Christ, we know we will also share his new life.*

*9 We are sure of this because Christ rose from the dead, and **he will never die again**. Death no longer has any power over him.*

*10 He died once to defeat sin, and now he lives for the glory of God.*

Now in verse 8 we have the same idea that we found in verse 3 and verse 5. **We have died with Christ and now have risen in new life with Christ.** We participate in the same holy life that Jesus lives, now and forever. Then in verse 9, building on the same thought, we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death has no more control over Him. Consequently it has no more control over those of us who have been joined to Christ by faith. We know this because verse 9 says that Christ is never going to die again. God raised Jesus from the dead and in so doing demonstrated that the power of sin and death, had been defeated. When Christ defeated death He conquered sin and this was a final victory to which nothing else needed to be added. Almost takes your breath away doesn't it?

And then verse 10 confirms that Christ died once and it was a death that will require no repetition because **death has no more power**. Jesus has broken that power and that was a very important principle to the Jews of the day because under the old sacrificial system they would have to sacrifice animals repeatedly to cover their sin. But Jesus who is the Lamb of God was the perfect sacrifice once and for all. And because Jesus died once and came out of the grave breaking the power of sin, those who believe in Him and are placed with Him in His death and resurrection, have also broken the power of sin permanently. It will never lay claim on them again. It will never be their master.

Verse 10 tells us that Jesus died to sin. Verse 2 told us that believers died to sin. What's the connection? Whatever it means for Jesus it means for us. It means that Jesus died to the penalty for sin. Romans 6:23 says that "*The wages of sin is death.*" **DEATH, THEREFORE, IS THE PENALTY FOR BEING A SINNER.** When Jesus died on the cross, He died to sin in terms of paying the penalty for sin. Jesus paid the penalty and met the demand of sin. God said in Genesis 2 :17: "*You sin, you die.*" Jesus said, "*I'll take the penalty of death for everybody.*" So he died to sin once in paying the penalty of sin for everyone ever born.

**When we died in Christ, our penalty was paid also.** That is why sin has no more power over us in terms of being penalized for the sins we've committed. That is why a believer does not have to go to Hell to pay for their sins. They have already been paid for. The wages (which means what you deserve to get) for your sin is your death, and when you believe in Jesus as your Savior, you died in Jesus who had paid that penalty. **Consequently the penalty for your sin was paid by Him and that is why sin has no further claim on you.** So when it says in verse 2 that we died to sin and in verse 10 that Jesus died to sin, we come together. Both of us can die to sin together in the sense of paying the penalty for sin. There is only one way for you to deal with your sin; you must

die. And you either die in Hell forever paying for them, or you die in Jesus Christ where they are paid for instantly and you then qualify to spend forever in Heaven. The choice again is yours.

Now there's one more thing we have to cover here. Jesus not only died to the penalty of sin, but He died to the power of sin. You might say, "*Wait a minute, was Jesus under the power of sin?*" Absolutely. He bore our sins in His own body. In fact in 2 Corinthians 5:21, we read:

*For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.*

Jesus was temporarily under the power of sin in a manner beyond our ability to understand. Imagine Jesus on the cross with all the weight of all the sin of all the people who ever lived throughout history heaped upon Him. He was under the power of sin and it killed Him. We need to clearly understand that Jesus was God and without sin, He did not have to die. He could have hung there on the cross for as long as He wanted to, and the Romans could have pierced His body with spears all day long and He would not have died. The reason that Jesus died was that He took all the sin of all time upon Himself and paid for it with His death. It was that sin that caused His death.

By dying He bore the penalty for sin. By being raised from the dead, He broke the power of sin, and entered into a new state where He was no longer under the power of sin, and if you're a believer, you and I came out of that grave with Him and we are no longer under the power of sin either. We became a new person.

Next time we'll continue this discussion beginning with Romans 6:11. But I want to encourage you to review this message on our web site if you want further clarification. And then, if you still have questions, post them on our web site and we'll get back to you with the answers. May you be secure in God's care until we meet next time.