

The Gospel of John

Our New Life in Christ

John 1-7, II Corinthians 5:14-21

INTRODUCTION:

Our message this morning is going to be more topical by nature than expository (a verse by verse study). This is a message that God has put on my heart for the last couple of weeks. The message gets its roots from the first seven chapters of the Gospel of John. I have entitled the message "**Our New Life in Christ**". Using the same phrases as Paul, we are going to get away from the milk for awhile this morning and eat some solid food!

We need to see what the scriptures reveal about how this "**New Life in Christ**" should manifest itself within us. It is only by a true understanding of the scripture that we can have confidence that we are indeed living for Christ - that we are not a "false disciple". One of the best passages of scripture that reveals what our new life in Christ should look like is found in **II Cor. 5:14-21**. Let us listen to the Holy Spirit through our scripture reading and let Him direct us in our Christian lives.

All Stand and Read Scripture.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (NASB)

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

¹⁶ Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer.

¹⁷ Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. ¹⁸ Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Prayer

During His ministry, Jesus offered an invitation to everyone to believe in Him. The reactions of the people separated them into various groups:

- **The convinced** that received the truth.
- **The contrary** that rejected the truth. They do not want to be confused by the facts.

- **The confused** that wrestled with the truth. These people were trapped between their religious leaders and the words of Jesus.
- **The conceited** that are blinded by the truth. The religious leaders felt that if anyone should be able to recognize the Messiah when He came, **THEY** would be the ones who would. They had their own theology figured out. Their own rules for morality and "religious" living even took priority over the truth of the scripture. After all "They were God's chosen people" and it was their responsibility to direct others to God through their rules and understanding. But they allowed their traditions to blind them to the truth.
- **The contemplative** that searched for the truth.

My question to you is: **Which group do you fit into?** Before you consider your final answer, I have a couple of verses that I would like to read to you.

Matthew 7:13-14 (NASB)

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

You see, I think a lot of people get comfortable with "doing church". They are in church out of obligation to please God. They are comfortable with the thought that if they come, sing songs, listen to prayer, take communion, and listen to a sermon then they must be someone who has a "New Life in Christ". They are doing all the correct weekly traditional things.

I take the warning from Matthew 7 very seriously. It says there will be a lot of people who think that they are on the right path based upon their beliefs only to find out in the end that they were actually on the broad path that leads to destruction.

How does that happen?

It happens when we allow tradition to override what the scriptures actually tell us. This was the problem with the Jewish leaders. They thought they had the key to heaven in their back pocket. They thought their religious traditions and beliefs were the true path to God. But Jesus told them that they were blind to the truth. They were putting all of their faith in their own traditions instead of the truth of the scriptures.

This morning, I would like to look at scripture and see how God's word describes what **happens** to a true believer when he starts a new life in Christ. But more importantly how that new life in Christ should **manifest itself** in our Christian life according to the scripture.

That is why God preserved the scripture for us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So we could understand the will of God in our lives.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NASB)

⁵ Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?

Our ultimate goal in this life should be that we **truly** have a new life in Christ.

Let's look briefly at what changes are promised to us when we receive a new life in Christ?

- We become a new Creature. We die to our old self.
- Our sin is removed from us. Even though we have sinned and even continue to sin, due to the world that we are in, we are now found righteous (free of sin) before God.
- We are reconciled back to God. This is a restored relationship with God that had been severed by sin.
- Our body is becomes a temple of God. **The Holy Spirit lives within us!**
- We become an heir to the Kingdom of Heaven and are adopted as a Child of God.
- Eternal life. Jesus refers to this as "**Living Water**" that will cause us to never thirst again.
- We no longer fear death because Jesus has give us eternal life through His "living water". This is an eternal life in Heaven in the presence of God and His glory where there will no longer be hunger, thirst, pain, tears, or sorrow.

We should all feel pretty good about these things, because we all accept these gifts of grace through faith. People are always willing to accept God's grace. Remember, Jesus had a lot of "followers" during his ministry. They loved to hear the promises. They really liked the miracles that He was performing for them. They even admitted that this had to be a man of God, because no common man could do these things.

But we learn that many of His disciples turned out to be "false disciples". These were the ones who were on the broad path that leads to destruction. They were going through the motions, but when it came time to actually act on their belief, they were unwilling to surrender themselves to Him.

The false disciples who walked away were the **contrary** who rejected Jesus. He taught them and they heard. He gave evidence that He was the Messiah by His miracles and offered them salvation, but they rejected his invitation.

We can suffer the same fate. It is one thing to accept by faith all of the wonderful gifts that God bestows upon us when we start a new life in Christ. But the scriptures tell us that if we are a "true disciple" then we must enter through the small gate. The way is narrow and it is the only path that leads to life, and **there are few who find it.**

So now I would like to look at how those changes should manifest themselves within us.

- We become a new Creature. We die to our old self.
- We love Christ more than anything in our lives.
- Our New Life in Christ is motivated by that love.
- We no longer live for ourselves, we live for Christ. It is no longer "me, me, me". Christ comes first in our lives. Everything that we do, we try to do to please God.
- We are given a ministry of reconciliation. Just as Christ reconciled our relationship with God, we have been given the ministry to tell others how they can have their relationship with God restored also.

Let's go back to our scripture reading. This passage describes authentic Christianity. Let us see how Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, describes this new life in Christ. Let me encourage you to look through your own eyes at yourself and determine if you are living the life described here.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB)

¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

Christianity is **not** an **addition to** or **improvement of** the old life; **it is a new life** altogether. When you receive Christ you become a new person with new resources - which makes possible a whole new way of life.

Let's briefly look at the **3 aspects of this new life** that Paul describes.

BODY:

I. OUR MOTIVATION TO SERVE.

The first aspect is a radically new source of motivation for your life.

How does God motivate this change?

It is not by fear or threat. It is not by duty or obligation.

Unfortunately, Christians have resorted to these motives to motivate people to live for Christ. They will insinuate that...

- "GOD WILL GET YOU; IF YOU DO NOT WORK FOR HIM!"
- "HE HAS DONE SO MUCH FOR YOU - YOU ARE OBLIGATED TO RETURN THE FAVOR".

Both of these can produce behavioral change, but the change will be superficial. You will do the bare minimum and you will serve Christ grudgingly. Unfortunately, the church is filled with people living this way and it is a tragedy because God never intended or desired for our motivation to be based upon obligation or fear.

God motivates this change by **LOVE**.

2 Corinthians 5:14a (NASB)

¹⁴For the **love** of Christ controls us,

There is no more powerful motivator in the human realm than love. Nothing produces zeal and loyalty and the willingness to gladly go beyond what is required like love. This is our first commandment, is it not? We are to "**love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.**"

ILLUSTRATION:

I have an employee named Walter, who has worked with me for over 21 years now. We often play praise and worship music while we work. As you know most is written from scripture. One of the songs that touched me recently is sung by the Maranatha Singers. It is entitled "You Have Given Life to Me". It was one of songs that motivated this message. It goes like this...

(Sing) I will serve you because I **love** you. You have given life to me. I was nothing until you found me. You have given life to me. Heartaches, broken people, ruined lives are why you died on Calvary. Your touch is what I long for. You have given life to me.

How do you get motivated by Christ's love?

Notice verse 14. Our love grows for Christ as we more fully appreciate the meaning of Christ's death - that he died in **your** place on the cross. He died to free us from our sin and thus we die to our worldly self.

2 Corinthians 5:14 (NASB)

14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

As you learn what the Bible teaches about the cross, and as you choose to believe it, the Holy Spirit enables you to experience the motivating power of his love in your life.

2 Corinthians 5:15b (NASB)

15 ...so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

Talk about a radical change! It **is** possible to be liberated from living for yourself and to live solely for Christ, if we are motivated by our love for Him and what He has done for us.

II. OUR NEW WAY TO EVALUATE PEOPLE.

The second radically new thing Paul mentions is a whole new way of estimating or evaluating people. God replaces the old way with a new way.

2 Corinthians 5:16 (NASB)

16 Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.

What does it mean to evaluate people "according to the flesh?"

This refers to faulty human standards rather than according to God's way. Human standards are arbitrary and superficial. We base our opinions on people by how they dress, the shoes they wear, and the length of their hair, the car they drive, the house and neighborhood they live in, their college degrees, their job, their salary, and their possessions.

The proof that this is faulty is that it leads to a faulty evaluation of Christ. According to the world's standards, Jesus Christ was a total loser. He was a Jew and a carpenter. He had a small following. He was rejected by the Jews and Romans and He was crucified on a cross.

Yet he was the Messiah, God in the flesh, and the most important Person in the world. He is the one who has indisputably affected humanity more than anyone else in human history.

No matter how great you are from the world's perspective, you still need Christ or you are missing the very purpose of your existence. As we take on this perspective, we can be freed from intimidation to help these people by sharing Christ with them.

III. OUR NEW PURPOSE IN LIFE.

The third radically new thing that Jesus gives us is a whole new purpose for life.

No matter how young or old you are or how new in Christ or spiritually mature you are, we have **ALL** (not just the minister) been given the most significant ministry in the world - the ministry of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18 (NASB)

18 Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ **and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,**

Reconciliation means "bringing disconnected parties back together into a relationship of love and unity." **As those who have been reconciled to God, we have the privilege of helping others do the same.** This is a privilege that God has given us. It should not be considered an obligation or done through the fear of God. The sharing of God's grace with others should be an act of love.

2 Corinthians 5:19-21 (NASB)

19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ***21*** He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

God is ready to reconcile with people just the way they are. He does not hold their sins against them as a barrier to knowing him and experiencing his life-changing love.

CONCLUSION:

I urge you this morning to look honestly at your Life in Christ! Are you just going through the motions of "doing church" to keep up appearances and to feel good about yourself? It is very easy for us to rely on our religious traditions for our salvation. This blinds us to the truth of God and leads us on the broad path that leads to destruction.

When you were saved, did you actually begin a new life? Did you lose the focus on yourself and surrender yourself to serve only Christ?

Do you search the scriptures daily to learn the truth and seek God's guidance in your life?

Is your Christian life motivated by your love for Christ and what He has accomplished for you? We don't serve Him because we "**fear**" him, or because we feel we "**have to**" through "**obligation**". A true disciple cannot stop themselves from loving **Him** and talking **about Him** to others.

Galatians 2:20 (NASB)

20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

God Be With You.