

The new life we have been given in Christ

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[0 : 00] I have two readings this evening, and they're short enough, but I'm going to be turning to 2 Corinthians 5 to begin with, and then I'm going to be turning back to Romans 6.

Both our readings this evening concern the new life, that is the new life that we have in Christ, and by new, we don't mean new in the same way the world does often, but this is a different type of new. So, in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 17 and 18, it says this. I know that we're picking up halfway through, but I'm sure you'll get the gist. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come.

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Well, if you'd like to turn backwards in your Bibles to Romans chapter 6.

And we're going to read the first four verses here. So, Romans chapter 6, verses 1 through to 4.

Sorry, 1 through to 11, but it's 1 through to 4 that we'll be concentrating on. What then shall we say? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means. How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ, Jesus, were baptized into his death? We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united in him with a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For the one who has died has been set free from sin. Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin, once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[3 : 24] If I can draw your attention to those couple of verses in Corinthians, especially verse 17, where it says, the old is gone, the new has come, that anyone in Christ is a new creation.

And just keep your mind for a moment on the word new. And then here in verse 4 of chapter 6 of Romans, it says that we, having received Christ through death and resurrection, are now to walk in the newness of life.

And so very simply, this idea of something being new is very prominent or the key part of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's a significant part for us to understand newness. What does new mean? And that's what we're going to look at this evening. What does it actually mean to have a new life?

Anyone who belongs to Jesus has a new life. But what does the new life actually mean? Well, firstly, in Corinthians and in Romans, it clearly points out that a new life is a reconciled life.

[4 : 40] That a new life is a life that's not alienated from God, but actually has a life with God in relationship with Him. And that's a key part of newness, because that's not something that you've ever had before outside of Christ.

Only in Christ do you get to enjoy God. outside of Christ, you get to enjoy God's wrath, which is what we saw this morning, which is not something to enjoy at all.

So if we were to ask the question to Corinthians, what does this newness look like? The answer would simply be reconciliation. You are reconciled with God.

Now, over in Romans chapter 6, here it explains it a little differently, not as a contradiction, but just giving you another angle on the same kind of newness. And that is that you have actually been given life at the cross.

What you have been given at the cross is life, and not like the so-called life you thought you had before you came to Jesus. And there are many people who have the experience of before they come to Jesus, knowing that they're living, but knowing that they're kind of dead on the inside as well.

[5 : 55] Knowing that they have a life, but knowing that their life is somehow empty, and sort of there's a void there that needs filling. So there's this sort of oxymoronic type of thing going on, where it's very hard to figure out where exactly I am.

But when you come to Christ and you experience salvation, you then begin to realize, right, now I know, now that I have what I know was missing, I didn't know that I was missing this, but now I know that I have this, I'm able to look back and see that was what was missing.

And that was Christ. Christ was missing. And Christ is life. Christ is your life. And so this idea of newness is that reconciliation with God leads to life.

or reconciliation with God is what it means to be truly alive. And so that's how I want you to think about reconciliation for a moment.

That to know that you have reconciliation is to know that you actually have life. So I'm going to give a brief summary. Here, there are two types of newness, and this needs to be explained.

[7 : 10] Because not all new things are equally new. Tomorrow will be a new day. But the day itself will be no different than today. It'll contain 24 hours.

It'll contain a morning, an afternoon, and an evening. It'll contain probably the same type of chores that today has or yesterday did. Okay?

The day itself will be a new day, but the day itself will be just like any other day that you can go back into history. Okay? There have been plenty of Mondays throughout human history.

Okay? Tomorrow is new, but in the same sense, it's not new. Okay? It's a new day. What's in the day may be different and new, but actually the day itself is just another day.

It's new by the fact that there's an additional day to live. But that's only the way. That's the only sense in which it is new, that it is a new day to live.

[8 : 10] So every day that comes, you can say it is a new day, but it's not really a new day. Another way of looking at this would be buying a new house. Well, if you think about it carefully, if you go and visit a house, and you say to the people in the house, I know it doesn't work like this, but just for the point of illustration, let's imagine that house buying is simple, and you go to the people in the house and say, I would like to buy your house, and they say, okay, and I would like to sell it to you, you're moving into a new house, but they're moving out of an old one.

Okay? What is new to you is old to them. Okay? So this idea of newness needs to be understood very carefully. Okay?

The house is new, but it's only new in the sense that it's new to you. And to them who are moving out, the house is old. Okay? Not because it's old and decrepit, and it's falling down, but because they've lived in it for a number of years.

It's been built for 40 or 50 years. It's old in that sense alone. So now you come to the Christian life, and God tells you it's new. But in what sense is it new?

And this needs to be understood. Because when God gives you new life, it's not like that. It's not like a new day. It's not new to you.

[9 : 31] It is new altogether. And this is a distinction that we have to make. The life that you have at the new birth is not like the life that you were given at your original birth.

It's not the same thing at all. It is not another version of the same, only saved. It is a different life altogether.

And that is something that sometimes we tend to forget has actually happened at the cross. That when God says the old has gone and the new has come, he's not saying, oh, this is like another Monday or another Tuesday or another Wednesday.

He's saying, no, this is new. This is new in the sense that it's not like the previous one. It's not another version of the previous one. It is new by the very fact that it is different from the previous one.

And so the life that you have in Christ is a different life altogether. This means that you can never really think of the Christian life as a second chance or a second go at life because that's not what it is.

[10 : 46] A second go at life would be a second go at the old version or a second chance at the old version. That the old is just, your slate is wiped clean, but it's still the same slate. No, no, what God is saying, everything's new.

Everything's new. It's not that your old life has been wiped clean and you can start again now that you're saved, but rather you have been given a new life altogether.

And this is something quite strange for us to get used to because we're still living in the same body we did before we were saved. But nevertheless, it is true that the life God sees, the one that God has given you, is qualitatively different than the life that you had at birth.

Here's a couple of ways of explaining it. In Corinthians, Paul is saying to the church that the old is gone and the new has come. And what he means by that is there is no way for the new to come while the old is staying around.

Okay, the new replaces the old. The old has to go in order for the new to come. Over in Romans, it says that this type of person who is now new and no longer old can't continue in sin because that's what you did in the old life.

[12 : 05] In the new life, you don't do that because the new life doesn't do that. And that's the point that Paul makes here. You're not to live your new life like you did your old life because it is a different life altogether.

This is how he puts it. Chapter 6, verse 3. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Verse 4. We were buried with him by baptism into death. In order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too, here it is, we too might walk in newness of life.

And what that means is this. Listen carefully. Jesus did not die so that you could live. Jesus died so that you could die.

Jesus lives so that you can live. What Jesus offers you at the cross is the prospect of being able to die to your old life with the prospect of resurrection.

[13 : 15] Why? Because it's a non-negotiable. All sin must be put to death. All sinners must die. The wages of sin is death.

And so what Christ gives you in his death and resurrection is the opportunity for you to die with him with the prospect of resurrection. Christ died so that you could die.

Why? Because that needs to go. That is old. It cannot continue. And so it goes. And the life that you have been given is now a life that exists completely within the resurrection of Jesus.

The only reason why you have a new life in Christ today is because Christ has been raised from the dead. Okay? Jesus died so that you could die.

Jesus lives so that you can live also. And that's the promise of the resurrection. The promise of the resurrection is that you, out of it, get a brand new life.

[14 : 16] But new doesn't mean the same as the old one. New life means different life. So let me explain this.

I've received a second-hand car once that was new to me, but the car was not new itself. And it didn't take me long to figure this out.

You know? Suddenly you're driving down the motorway and you're thinking, oh, this is not... Is it supposed to be slowing down while you've still got your foot on the accelerator? And I don't understand what's going on.

Well, it's a new car. Well, it's new to me, but it's clearly not a new car. It's a bit like life expectancy. I keep trying to get through to my brother, who doesn't quite understand the principle of he's got a lifetime guarantee.

And I want to constantly point out to him, whose lifetime? The toaster's lifetime or your lifetime? Because they are quite a bit different. Okay?

[15 : 16] And sometimes we fail to understand what we're addressing. So this idea of new is not something that's just new to us, but rather it's something that has never existed before.

It's new in its very creation. It is brand new. And the people that get it are the people who have relationship with God, those who have been reconciled to God through the life, through the death, and through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, what they receive is new.

Brand new. Now, the challenge here is simple. That you must no longer be comfortable with the wrong things, and you must learn to be comfortable with the right things.

You ever tried on a new pair of shoes, and you suddenly think, oh my, they feel nice. And then you do a day's work in them. And think, suddenly they're not so nice.

Right? That there's the sense of, oh, these are nice. And then there's the sense of, oh, I'll leave them for a week. Well, that sense of the uncomfortableness that comes with something new is something that the Christian should know quite a lot about.

[16 : 33] But Jesus put it this way, that when the Spirit of God goes out into the world, convicting people so that they would be brought to God, the way that the Spirit of God does it is to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of the judgment to come.

God is doing that while we're sat here. God's Spirit is out in the world convicting people of sin, righteousness, and the judgment to come.

And it is tremendously uncomfortable for anybody who feels it. Tremendously uncomfortable to come under the conviction of sin, the conviction of what is right, and the conviction of the judgment to come.

It is terrifying to some people. But we know as Christians that that initial sense of uncomfortableness is what actually leads to the comfort of being embraced by the Father in salvation.

It's the uncomfortableness that leads to the comfortableness of salvation itself. And so what Paul says here is that a Christian should now feel uncomfortable with anything that is sinful and feel very comfortable with the things of God.

[17 : 48] But that kind of new sensation is something very difficult often for the Christian life to handle. In other words, what Paul is saying is that your new life takes effect immediately.

Your new life in Christ takes effect the day you have new life in Christ. Your values change. What you think changes. Your belief changes.

Your biblical understanding changes. How you behave changes. In other words, what Paul is effectively saying is that you ought to be able to be converted, go home and live with your family for a month and they recognize after a couple of days there's something different about you without you telling them what's happened.

In other words, it'll come out of your skin. It'll come out of your mouth. It'll come out of your heart and your mind. You will not be able to contain the new life because it is different.

It is qualitatively different. And that's what Paul is saying that we have received. So we need to feel the uncomfortableness now of the sin and become more comfortable with the things of God.

[19 : 01] So let me put it this way. There is a temptation for young Christians and it's still there for the older Christians as well of just one more time.

That they're about to give up this sin that they struggled so long with and the way they decide that they'll give up this sin is by committing it just one more time.

But this time will be the last time, right? And I won't do it again. Like a person who has a terrible weakness for alcohol and the way they decide that they're going to give up alcohol is by saying, well, I'm going to have one last drink and this will be the last drink that I ever have.

And as they're taking a sip of the alcohol and they're, I really mean it this time, unaware of the very fact that they're doing the very thing that they're trying not to do.

Like a person trying to give up cigarettes and they're standing beside a friend and they're saying, well, I'll give up but I'll just have my final fag. I'll just have my final cigarette.

[20 : 03] And I'll take a couple of puffs and just as they're about to throw it on the floor, it comes back up to their mouth. This time I really mean it and there it's gone.

Well, that kind, that kind of tension is where a Christian is more comfortable with the type of things that God does not approve of rather than the type of things that God does approve of.

That transition is a difficult one. That's not to say that drinking alcohol is a sin or anything like that. But what I'm addressing is the fact that where it is in excess to the point where you are damaging yourself and you're gone to the point where God doesn't approve of it, but the issue that you have is that why are you uncomfortable with the conviction of new life and more comfortable with just one more puff, just one more time?

And that's the type of transition, the type of thing that Paul is trying to get through to these young, new believers who have been saved by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

That there is a sense in which we are new that we have to understand what it means. And what it means is it is a transition away from being comfortable with the old and being more comfortable with the new, being less comfortable with sinful habits and more comfortable with holiness.

[21 : 37] Difficult, I know. So when Paul says here in verse 4 that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, that we too might walk in newness of life.

And what that means is fairly simple. That the newness of life is something that is of God but we have to move our feet.

I'll explain it in a slightly different way. The Spirit's work is completely different from the work of Christ. I'm going to use two big words, okay? But you're used to big words.

You know, delicatessen is a big word and you have no problem with it, okay? You know, supercalifragilisticexpialidocious is a big word and you even sing it.

Here's the first big word, vicarious. And what vicarious means is that Christ, what Christ did, he did for us. We didn't have to do anything.

[22 : 43] His life, his death, his resurrection was completely for us. We contributed nothing but our sin and Christ saved us from it and gave us new life. It was the vicarious work of God.

It was completely his doing, not our own. Here's the second big word that, with the Spirit, cooperative. That the work of the Spirit in the believer's life is a cooperative work, which means that as you are convicted to move your feet in the things of God, you are to move your feet in the things of God.

That as the Spirit of God leads you, or mind in your heart and your soul towards the things of God, you are to walk in the newness of life because the resurrection has given you that new life.

Here's the exhortation. It is true that God is transforming us. In other words, we're not yet complete. But it is also true that the old is gone and the new has come.

And therefore, there's a distinction between what is new and what is complete. It would be fair to say that a newborn baby is a complete human. But a newborn baby is a complete human in one sense.

[24 : 01] But they are an incomplete human in many other senses. They have to grow. Their muscles and their faculties have to become completed and mature over many, many years.

And so, in Christ, when you were born, in Christ, given this new life, you are a baby. You are fully new, but you are not complete.

Okay? You are brand new. In other words, this did not exist in you before, but you are not complete. The completeness comes with walking in the newness of this life that you have been given.

And that means that over time, we become more and more uncomfortable with the things that God is uncomfortable with and more and more comfortable with the things of God.

God is at work in you. So let me conclude. This means that the life you have if you belong to Jesus is perpetually new.

[25 : 09] It will never grow old. It will never fade away. It will never become tarnished or damaged.

It will never be looked upon as though it needs repair. It is perpetually new because it is new in Christ. But new doesn't mean complete.

Complete complete is something that happens as you walk in the newness of life. So remember, this newness is not like a new day.

It's not like a new house or a new car that's an old car. It's new in that it is different. It is not the same that you had before. It is new in the sense that you have never had this before.

So know what God has given you. Know what God has given you. And know why God has given it to you. And with this I'll finish.

[26 : 12] That every time you look at the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, what you ought to see is the value of a sinless life. As you look at the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, you are seeing the price paid for your life to be new.

new. And by new we mean brand new, different new, totally new, not like anything before. Amen.