

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

What is the Christian Life?

II Corinthians 5:14-21

1 What is the Christian life? You need to understand what this life is and how it differs from the one you are living now to know if you really want it.

Our scripture gives us a good description. 2 Second Corinthians, chapter 5, verses 14 through 21, explain, For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 3¹

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of

¹ Verses 14-17.

reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. ⁴ ²

My definition of the Christian life is simply, the Lord Jesus living His post resurrection life in and through you. ⁵ In verse 17 here, ³ the word "new" is important.

There are two words in the original language for "new". ⁶ The first word ⁴ means to be new in relationship to time. It's new in contrast to something like it being old. ⁷ The other word ⁵ means to be new in relationship to substance; a different kind or type from a previous model. ⁸ The word "new" in our passage is this second meaning; to be a different kind.

² Verses 18-21.

³ II Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

⁴ νέος.

⁵ καινός.

The caterpillar is an ugly multi legged bug which crawls slowly up onto a leaf in a tree. It forms its cocoon and hibernates for a significant period of time. When it immerges it is a completely different insect. Instead of being limited to crawling on leaves it launched into delicate flight as a beautiful moth or butterfly.

That's the concept found in this scripture. The Christian life is not only new, it's a different type of new!

So, what do we find in God's word here about the difference between the life apart from the Lord and the Christian life centered in the Lord? 9

The first description is . . .

I. It's a New Creation - v17

It's a new creation. Verse 17 states, **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!** ¹⁰

How can you be a new creation? ¹¹ It's by being born again! The Lord said in John, chapter 3, verse 3, **I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.** The people who first heard Him say that were just as confused as you and I would be. ¹² To confuse matters even worse, He continued to explain that this birth needed to be "of water and the Spirit". ⁶

Here is my understanding of what Lord Jesus meant. He used the word "birth" to get us to think about physical birth. Physical birth is the result of a father and a mother expressing their love to one another. A precious baby is produced.

⁶ John 3:5.

There is a process God designed to describe the commitment a person must make to become a Christian. The decision to forsake your former way of life and surrender to the Lord's authority results in you becoming a new creation. The ceremony of Christian baptism describes that process. ¹³

The father's role in the spiritual birth process is played by the Holy Spirit. He uses, primarily, the written word of God. In James, chapter 1, verse 18, we read, **He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.** When you are exposed to God's word, the Bible, you begin a gestation period as the Holy Spirit helps your spirit begin to contemplate the gospel message and the implication of surrendering to a totally different way of life. ¹⁴

When you are ready to make that commitment, the mother's role is played by the baptismal pool and the nourishment of the church. Titus, chapter 3, verse 5,

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁵

The baptism ceremony, complete immersion in water, pictures this new life beginning as you die to the old life, bury the old corpse to rise again into a brand new life. ⁷ ¹⁶

The next big question is how can you continue as a different kind of creature than you were before? ¹⁷
When you become a Christian you become a member of God's family. Here is where you get the leading and encouragement of others who are going through the same transformation of life as you. That's what the church is all about! ⁸ We are all on the same spiritual journey! ¹⁸

⁷ Romans 6:4 - We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁸ I John 1:7 - But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

As a Christian you inherit God's Holy Spirit as an internal witness ⁹ and as a seal of your new relationship to God. ¹⁰ ₁₉

As a new spiritual baby, God wants you to crave spiritual food (the word of God) the same way a baby craves milk! ¹¹ That's how you continue to grow successfully as God's child.

So, verse 17 describes the Christian life as a new creation. ₂₀ Verse 15 says it's . .

II. It's a New Motivation - v15

It's a new motivation. ₂₁ So, what are the new motivations? ₂₂ Verse 15, **And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. You are to live for Christ, not for yourself! ₂₃**

⁹ Romans 8:16 - The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

¹⁰ Ephesians 4:30 - And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

¹¹ I Peter 2:2 - Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

You are to seek the heavenly lifestyle. Colossians, chapter 3, verses 2 and 3, say, **Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.** ²⁴

If you take seriously what I just mentioned you will find some promises that accompany these motives. God loves you so much that you can trust Him with all your worries. ¹² You can trust your life to God because He works it all out for your benefit. ¹³ ²⁵

In Matthew, chapter 6, Lord Jesus tells a parable. In it He states that God takes care of nature. He feeds common birds adequately and clothes flowers so they blossom beautifully. Since God takes care of the seemingly insignificant things in life, don't worry. You are more important to Him than a bird or a flower. ²⁶ Verse 33 concludes, **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** ²⁷

¹² I Peter 5:7 - Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

¹³ Romans 8:28 - And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

So that's what the new motivations are. But where do they come from? ²⁸ Galatians, chapter 2, verse 20, says, **I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me**. This means Lord Jesus, through His Holy Spirit, actually lives His post resurrection life in you! He lives in you. He talks through you. He conducts His life through you. His motives become your motives. His purposes become yours! ²⁹ You need to surrender your will to His will so that His desires can be exhibited through you. ³⁰

You do this by going to the word of God. You need to know how Jesus felt. You need to know what His attitudes were. You need to know how He conducted Himself. Then you can take up your cross and follow His royal example!

We have learned so far that the Christian life is described as a new creation and as a new motivation for living. ³¹ The third description is . . .

III. It's a New Relationship to Others - v20

It's a new relationship to others. Verse 20 says, **We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

This verse says a couple of things about the Christian life. ³² First of all, you are an ambassador; a representative of the Lord Jesus. Ambassadors represent their country to other countries. When citizens, who live in those other countries, think of the ambassador they draw conclusions about what the country represented must be like. So the ambassador has the responsibility to display the most favorable image he can. ³³

You, as an ambassador of Christ, have a mission. Notice verse 18, **All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.** ³⁴ The word "reconcile" ¹⁴ means to

¹⁴ καταλλάσσω.

exchange value for value like exchanging money from one currency to another. When my wife and I cross the border into Mexico to visit our orphanage there, we may exchange some dollars for their equivalent value in pesos. Lord Jesus dealt with the money changers in the temple who, apparently, cheated their customers with the exchange rate. Your mission as an ambassador is to live the Lord's life to the degree that those who don't know Him could be reconciled to Him! ³⁵ The Lord put it this way, **Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.** ¹⁵ ³⁶

So, how would people know that you're an ambassador? ³⁷ The Lord put it this way, **By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.** ¹⁶ ³⁸ The apostle, John, echoed that statement this way, **We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers.** ¹⁷ So, how much do you genuinely care for others? When

¹⁵ Matthew 4:19.

¹⁶ John 13:35.

¹⁷ I John 3:14.

people see that, they see a wonderful difference about you they don't see in many others. It's that Christian difference! ³⁹

This different life is more than you can generate on your own. You need to yield yourself to the Lord's Holy Spirit to have Him effectively minister through you. Lord Jesus wants to show forth the same life He lived in Palestine, but through you today. ⁴⁰ He wants to comfort lonely hearts. ⁴¹ He wants to instruct and teach those hungering and thirsting after righteousness. ⁴² He wants to seek and to save the lost. ⁴³ He wants to walk among men and tell them of His love. ⁴⁴ He wants to, again, present His personal message about the greatest sacrifice ever made for them. ⁴⁵ He wants to live and work through you to do all these things! ⁴⁶

Your responsibility now is to let Lord Jesus live within you to reconcile the world to Him!

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