

Exchanging Our Lives

Isaiah 40:31 [NIV] *“but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”*

The Hebrew word translated “renew” is “*châlah*” meaning change or exchange.

Genesis 31:7, 41 [NIV] *“yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me.” ... “It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times.”*

The same Hebrew word is translated “*changing*”, in this case for the worse, for Moses.

But a large part of our Christian life consists of exchanging something worse for something far better, always a wonderful bargain.

The very foundation of our Christian life lies in the vicarious atonement, which is in essence a transfer of guilt from us, as sinners, to Jesus Christ our Saviour.

2 Corinthians 5:21 [NIV] *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

This is too plain for anyone who is **not** wilfully blind to miss.

Jesus Christ by His death on the cross made it possible for a sinner to exchange their sin for Christ’s righteousness.

It’s that simple.

No-one is compelled to accept it, but at least that is what the scripture makes very plain.

What other acts of exchange are available for us in our day-to-day Christian existence?

John 3:36 [NIV] *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*

Our acceptance, in total belief, of Jesus Christ as our Saviour will bring about this exchange.

Romans 1:18-25 [NIV] *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator, who is for ever praised. Amen.”*

Although our creation cries aloud about a Creator God who is loving and faithful, people choose to ignore Him and “*do their own thing*” and have to eventually experience the wrath of God.

By faith and submission to God's will we exchange a life under the threat of God's wrath to one that accepted by God as His created child.

This is **not** by human means but by an act of divine grace.

The exchange of death for life.

Romans 6:23 [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

All we earn as sinners is death.

Romans 3:23 [NIV] *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*

We are all sinners without exception, *“dead men walking”* to use the term given to those on death row.

Romans 6:1-4 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? 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.”*

Our former sinful life has to die, this happens at the time of our baptism, by full immersion, symbolic of being buried in our grave.

So we then can begin to live a *“born again”* life with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master.

Galatians 2:20 [NIV] *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

This new life is really Jesus Christ living His life again in us.

Romans 6:11-13 [NIV] *“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.”*

We exchange death for a life of being instruments of God's love, His righteousness.

This is mysterious but **not** incredible.

This is one more example of how the ways of God and the ways of humans diverge.

When humans want things to become better they try to put things together or patch them, to improve them.

Humans improve cattle by careful breeding.

Humans improve cars and planes by streamlining them.

Humans improve health by diet, vitamins and surgery.

Humans improve plants by grafting.

Humans improve people by education.

God will have none of this patching.

God improves humans by making them new people.

He imparts a higher order of life and sets to work to destroy the old life.

We exchange weakness for strength.

This exchange and new strength is in direct proportion to our admitted weakness and total dependence on our Creator.

John 15:5-8 [NIV] *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

Of our own strength we can accomplish nothing that has eternal value.

2 Corinthians 12:10 [NIV] *“That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

Paul sets the pattern for every Christian.

What we do when we look to Jesus Christ for our strength is to switch our life from little battery to the infinite power of God.

Not our strength but God’s strength working in and through us.

One of the heaviest problems in the Christian life is the realisation that to live eternally with God we must become Holy.

1 Peter 1:14-15 [NIV] *“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;”*

This is **not** an option.

How can we become Holy?

We have to admit because of human examples in the history of humanity, it is possible for a person to attain to a high degree of external morality if they set their heart to it.

But is this what God is referring to as holiness?

No!

Isaiah 64:6 [NIV] *“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”*

All our effort to be righteous or holy in God’s eyes will end up in total failure.

Why?

Isaiah 55:8-9 [NIV] *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

Human thoughts and human ways of living are all polluted by our human nature which is prone to sin.

We have to abandon the effort to be holy and trust God to work within us to make us holy.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

A total surrender of our lives, every part of it to God’s influence.

Also resisting the pulls of society that want to drag us down to its base level.

John 14:26 [NIV] *“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

The Holy Spirit will reveal to us, among other things, how we are going to be made holy by God.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, **for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.**”*

Several things are explained about this process of being made holy in this passage of scripture.

- a) Love and obedience to the person and words of our Saviour Jesus Christ.
- b) The Spirit of Truth, as we have already read, is the Holy Spirit.
- c) Most of humanity at this time are blinded to the spirit world in which God exists and operates.
- d) What people don’t see, they reject.
- e) Upon conversion we have this spirit world revealed in measure.

1 Corinthians 2:6-11 [NIV] *“We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”*

Just as the human spirit in us gives us intellect and awareness [**Job 32:8**] so we are given spiritual awareness by the Holy Spirit.

- f) This giving of the Holy Spirit is in two stages.

“*With you*” walking alongside us and beginning to influence our thoughts and decisions as we absorb His Word the Christian Bible.

“*In you*” when we take the decision to allow the Holy Spirit to take over our lives and direct all we think and do.

- g) This total surrender to the will of the Holy Spirit allows Jesus Christ to live His life again in us, [**Galatians 2:20**] as He did in Paul.

What then is the result of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us?

Galatians 5:22-25 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*

These listed characteristics of the Holy Spirit that “*rub off*” on us, as we follow His lead, are the very righteousness and the Holy character of God.

All we have to do then is to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit, constantly being just one step behind Him all our lives.

This is how we are made holy by our Creator God.

There are many other happy exchanges we as Christians we may experience.

Human ignorance for godly knowledge.

Human folly for godly wisdom.

Human demerit for God’s merit.

Human mortality for God’s immortality.

Human faith for finally eternal sight of our loving Creator God.

Don’t miss out on all of these wonderful exchanges we can experience as we live true Christian lives.