

A Christian Life Is Always A Totally New Life

Christianity is **not** something you add to the life you are already living.

John 3:3-8 [NIV] *“In reply Jesus declared, **“I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”** “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with **everyone born of the Spirit.**”*

The scriptural term used for this new life, every Christian must begin to live, is “*born again.*”

From this we have to conclude there has to be a personal death.

Acts 2:36-38 [NIV] *“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, **“Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”***

This powerful statement was made by Peter who was filled and directed by the Holy Spirit [see **Acts 2:4**]

This statement was the climatic end to the first Christian sermon, in which Peter led his audience of fellow Jews through the prophetic scriptures pertaining to the coming Messiah [anointed one] who would be their Saviour.

At that time in their history, under the harsh rule of Rome, all Jews were looking for a Messiah to save them from this slavery by Rome.

Peter tells them that their longed-for Messiah had come and they had crucified Him.

The crowd was deeply shocked and moved, crying out “*what shall we do?*” when they came to realise what they had done.

They all recognised their sin against the very God they worshipped.

Peter told them to repent of this sin and then be baptised, as an outward sign of what had happened in their hearts and minds.

Why baptism?

The Greek word translated “*baptised*” is “*baptizō*” which comes from the root word “*baptō*” meaning to be wholly covered with a fluid.

Romans 6:3 [NIV] *“Or don’t you know that **all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?**”*

Baptism, that is complete immersion under the water, is symbolic of our dying and being placed in our earthly grave.

Matthew 28:18-20 [NIV] *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**”*

All would-be Christians who request adult baptism, responding to the commission that Jesus Christ gave to His disciples, need to understand the significance of this physical baptism.

As a Christian minister [now retired] I always asked all who came to be for baptism to first read certain scriptures to prepare their minds and spirit for what would be the most important decision they will ever make in their lives.

Luke 14:26-30 [NIV] *“**If anyone comes to me and does not hate** [loveless] **his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.** “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’”*

Jesus Christ is speaking to would-be disciples, clearly telling them that to follow Him and His lifestyle would be costly.

Following Jesus Christ is not something that can be taken lightly or without timely consideration of what is involved.

Let us pause and meditate on what our Saviour Jesus Christ is saying.

The word “*hate*” is the Greek word “*misēō*” means “*to love less,*” that is all the relationships listed have to take second place to our love and allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Included in that list is our own life.

The potential disciple then has to “*carry his cross.*”

What does this involve?

What was the end outcome of Jesus Christ when He carried His cross?

We all know the answer, His personal physical death.

Paul amplified on this cross-carrying and personal death.

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.**”*

In view of what God has done for all humanity through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Father’s only non-created Son, our only acceptable response is to lay down our lives as a “*living sacrifice.*”

What is a “*living sacrifice?*”

A life that has died and been resurrected to a new life.

A new life that has a remade mind and spirit that does not conform to this society’s way of living.

Only by doing this can we please our Creator God.

Before we leave our meditation on **Luke 14:26-30** notice that Jesus Christ gives as an illustration, the building of a tower.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 [NIV] *“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But **each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.** If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the **fire will test the quality of each man’s work.** If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”*

Every Christian has to become a builder of a new life.

This will involve hard work and always ensuring what we are building on is the only sure foundation, that of Jesus Christ, His words and lifestyle.

The Christian’s future reward in the Kingdom of God will depend on the quality of the life we are building now in this physical life.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 [NIV] *“**Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.**”*

This temple we are building, as we will soon see, does **not** belong to us and needs to involve the Holy Spirit to ensure that its quality is “*fire proof.*”

Not something that will be burnt up in the lake of fire on our judgement day.

Back now to the subject of baptism.

Romans 6:1-5 [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.** If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.”*

After our symbolic death under the waters of baptism we are resurrected to a new life, following the example of Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:6-10 [NIV] *“For we know that our old self was crucified with him [Jesus Christ] so that the body of sin might be done away with, **that we should no longer be slaves to sin,** because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. **Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.** For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but **the life he lives, he lives to God.**”*

This new life, if it is to follow the example of Jesus Christ, it is to “*live to God.*”

How do we do this, living to God?

Romans 6:11 [NIV] *“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*

We do **not** allow sin to rule our lives, but allow Jesus Christ to rule our new life.

I use the word “rule” because this is what the verses that follow indicate very explicitly.

Romans 6:12-14 [NIV] *“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. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”*

Sin is **no longer** to be our master, we are not to be slaves to a sinful way of life.

We have, through accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, under grace, **not** now under the penalty of the law, which is eternal death.

Romans 6:15 [NIV] *“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!”*

We are **not** to live a life that is constantly sinning the asking for God’s forgiveness. Such a life is still under the bondage of sin.

Romans 6:16-18 [NIV] *“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey, whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”*

The word translated slaves refers to bond slaves who have **no** personal rights **only** responsibilities toward their master.

What will this slavery to righteousness lead to?

Romans 6:19-23 [NIV] *“I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

This complete surrender to the will of God is the **only** way we will ever receive the gift of eternal life.

Only after the reading, meditating on these scriptures, asking and receiving answers from God’s Word, the Christian Bible, would I feel a person was ready to take this most important decision in their lives, to be baptised.

Just before I baptised the instructed candidate I would ask two questions.

1. Have you repented of your sins?
2. Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour, Lord and Master?

After receiving a “yes” answer to both of these questions I would then plunge them into their watery grave.

Next resurrect them to begin a new “born again” life.

The next words they heard from me often brought tears to our eyes.

“All your sins have been forgiven and forgotten by God because your Saviour Jesus Christ has paid the penalty of death for you.”

I then laid my hands on their head and prayed that the Holy Spirit would enter into them to direct their new life.

I would then welcome them into the created family of God.

After all the rejoicing I would take them aside and warn them that they had become a prime target for Satan and could expect him to let fly a few fiery darts in their direction.

I would also encourage them to ask the Holy Spirit for a *“shield of faith”* to fend off all this onslaught of Satan.

Galatians 5:22 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,”*

Faith or faithfulness is one of the *“fruits”* of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 6:10-18 [NIV] *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. **In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.** Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”*

Life as a disciple of Jesus Christ, a Christian, will not be a life of ease but a battleground in which we need constant protection.

[Download our article on the ‘*Armour of God*’ under subject heading ‘*Satan*’ for a full explanation of this spiritual protection we all need.]

Matthew 10:34-36 [NIV] *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. **I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.** For I have come to turn “‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’”*

Because we are now living a new *“born again”* life, many who were close to us may now, **not** understanding our change of lifestyle, distance themselves from us, and even persecute us.

How can we counter this pain of losing those former friends?

Join a church fellowship that is Bible-centred in its teaching and preaching.

An Old Testament prophet foretold of this painful isolation of those who feared and followed God, and gives us great encouragement.

Malachi 3:16-18 [NIV] *“Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name. **“They will be mine,” says the LORD Almighty, “in the day when I make up my treasured possession.** I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”*

After baptism we become very precious children to our Saviour and Creator God.