



## LIVING A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

**Reading:** Ephesians 4

### A new beginning

At baptism a new spiritual life begins. Our old way of life ends when we are buried *“with him (Christ) by baptism into death”*. Then, as *“Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father”*, we too rise from the water to begin a new life in Christ (Romans 6:4). At our baptism we promise God that we will change our way of life to serve Him. It is a decision to commit ourselves to Him for the rest of our lives. This huge change to our way of life requires effort and determination and is only possible with God’s help. But the change does not take place all at once and we will often fail. When we ask for forgiveness, God will hear us for Jesus’ sake:

*“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16).

### A new way of thinking

In Lesson 27 we learned that God is pure and righteous and so He is totally separate from the thinking, desires, ambitions and ways of all men and women. Therefore, when we commit ourselves to God, He asks us to separate ourselves from the ways of the world and commit ourselves to His ways and principles. Thus the new way of life needs a new way of thinking:

*“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on things that are above**, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. **Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry”** (Colossians 3:1-5).*

In Galatians 5:16-24 Paul again shows how our thinking has to change. ‘Flesh’ stands for our sinful thoughts and ‘Spirit’ for Godly thoughts. He shows how they are opposites:

*“... the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for **these are opposed to each other**, to keep you from doing the things you want to do”.*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GALATIANS 5:19-21</b> <b>THE WORKS OF THE FLESH ARE:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GALATIANS 5:22,23</b> <b>THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS:</b></p>
<p><i>... sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.</i></p>	<p><i>... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.</i></p>

This shows clearly that there will be a continual struggle in our spiritual lives because *“the fruit of the Spirit”* (godliness) is very different from *“the works of the flesh”* (the ways of the world).

The apostle Paul also likens the change to taking off old clothes and putting on new ones. He tells us in Ephesians 4:22,24 to *“put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires ... and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness”*.

The following table shows the old self we should take off and the new self we should put on.





<b>EPHESIANS 4:25 – 5:21</b>	
<b>THINGS WE SHOULD 'PUT OFF'</b>	<b>THINGS WE SHOULD 'PUT ON'</b>
Put away falsehood (lying).	Speak the truth.
Let the thief no longer steal.	Do honest work and so have something to share with anyone in need.
Let no corrupt talk come out of your mouths.	Speak what is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.
Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.	Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.	Be imitators of God and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us.
Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking ...	... instead let there be thanksgiving.
Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness.	Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true) and try to do what is pleasing to the Lord.
Do not be foolish and live unwisely.	Make the best use of time, understanding what the will of the Lord is.
Do not get drunk with wine.	Be filled with the things of the Spirit, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

### **God's will or our will?**

It is easy to worship God on Sunday but then ignore Him on other days. This is unacceptable. Our worship will only be sincere if we try to serve God all the time. Those in Christ will behave very differently from people in the world around them. Understanding the Bible is of no value unless we practise what it teaches us.

In Matthew 7:15-23 Jesus says that a diseased tree cannot produce good fruit nor can a thorn bush produce grapes. By this he meant that people who are inwardly full of evil cannot show true Christian qualities. They will be rejected by the Lord:

*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).*

Jesus chose to do his Father's will. It was hard. Those who choose to do God's will are promised a place in His heavenly kingdom when it is established on earth.

There may be times when we do not know whether it is right to do something. We may pray about it, but still not be sure because the Bible does not seem to tell us. To help us decide we should ask ourselves if Jesus would do it, if he were on earth today. If Jesus would not do it, then neither should his followers.

### **Belonging to a worldwide family**

By God's grace we become His sons and daughters at our baptism (2 Corinthians 6:18). It is an amazing thing that the Almighty God wants such a close relationship with us. But we will only continue to have this fellowship with God and the Lord Jesus if we "*walk in the light*", avoiding the darkness of sin (1 John 1:6,7).

Christadelphians have a worldwide fellowship. They all accept Jesus Christ as their Head and the Bible as their guide and only authority. This is why it is important to read it regularly, as we will discuss further in the next lesson. Prayer, collectively and individually, is also essential.





Jesus knew that his followers would easily forget how much he did by dying for them. At the last meal he shared with his disciples (the Last Supper), he told them how to remember his death (Luke 22:14-20). The bread and the wine are symbols to remind baptized followers of how Jesus gave his life for them, the bread representing his body, and the wine his blood. Disciples of Christ are commanded to remember his death regularly through these symbols. Christadelphians meet once a week to do this.

### **Loving and serving one another**

At the Last Supper, Jesus *“laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him”* (John 13:4,5).

The washing of feet was a servant’s work yet that is what Jesus did. Afterwards he said,

*“I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you”*  
(John 13:15).

He served his disciples with love and humility, and we must serve each other. Then we shall be the type of people that God wants in His kingdom:

*“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”* (Matthew 5:5).

Jesus said to his disciples before his death – and he still says it to true believers today,

*“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you”* (John 15:12).

He loved us so much that he suffered a very painful and shameful death for us. He laid down his life for us, and the apostle John says, *“we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers”* (1 John 3:16). It is a huge challenge to love others as Jesus has loved us!

Often we know how we should behave towards each other, but we find it very hard to do so. Our old self takes a long time to die! Some of us are proud, some quick-tempered; others are moody and easily irritated; all of us have our faults. These are things we have to fight against, as we try to show to others the love that Jesus has shown to us. There is a picture of that Christian love in 1 Corinthians 13. Read it for yourself. Here are verses 4-7 of the chapter:

*“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”.*

### **Loving our neighbour and our enemies**

Today many people demand their rights, and those who stand up for themselves are admired. Most people want to get the best for themselves, even if it means others have to suffer. But Christians should try to help others, even if they suffer in doing so.

A lawyer once came to Jesus, and asked him which was the greatest commandment. Jesus said to him,

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself”* (Matthew 22:37-39).

Read the story Jesus told about a good neighbour in Luke 10:30-37. If anyone is in need, we should help him, even if he is our enemy. We are not to stop and think whether we like him or not, or whether he really deserves our help. Jesus also said,

*“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”* (Matthew 7:12)

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you ...”* (Matthew 5:43,44).





The greatest thing we can do for others is to tell them the good news of the Kingdom of God. As God has invited us to keep His ways and to share the joys of His kingdom, so we will want to invite others to share these things.

### **Christian behaviour and our money, health and time**

Jesus warned:

*“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and money**” (Matthew 6:24).*

Paul showed that we should be content with what we have (1 Timothy 6:6-10). True followers of the Lord Jesus will not therefore gamble (1 Timothy 6:17) or take bribes (Exodus 23:8). Money and possessions are given to us by God (1 Chronicles 29:14-16) and we should not abuse them. We should use them to live sensibly and to serve God.

Similarly our health and strength are God-given, so those in Christ should not be involved in activities which will damage their health, or affect the lives of their loved ones. So, for example, they will avoid smoking, drinking alcohol to excess, and drug abuse. Those already involved with any of these will know how hard it can be to give them up, but with great determination and help from the Lord Jesus it can be achieved.

Our time is also God-given and so should be used sensibly (Ephesians 5:16). Paul says:

*“he (Christ) died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Corinthians 5:15).*

See also Romans 14:7,8 and 1 Peter 4:1-9.

### **Help from the Lord Jesus**

The new life is a challenge but the Lord Jesus is our guide through life as well as being our Saviour through whom our sins are forgiven. He will help us on the way and we will never be left to struggle alone. He will present the prayers of true disciples to God. In this way the Lord Jesus will share our life, with all its joys and sorrows, and help to prepare us to live with him in God’s kingdom.

#### **Summary**

Living the new life in Christ means:

- reading God’s Word every day
- praying to God and praising Him and His Son
- remembering the death of Jesus through bread and wine
- following the example of Jesus so that we:-
  - love our brothers and sisters in Christ
  - are considerate to other people and help them whenever we can, particularly by preaching the Gospel
  - do not take part in the ungodly activities of the world
  - above all else, love God with all our being.

#### **A verse to learn: 2 Corinthians 5:17**

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

**Passages to read: Luke 10:30-37; Luke 22:14-20; Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28**

