

Topic 3: All Things New

Understanding Who You Are in Christ

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

—2 Corinthians 5:17



Who doesn't love new stuff? The smell of a new car. The joy of making a new friend. The fun of discovering a great new restaurant or ideal vacation spot.

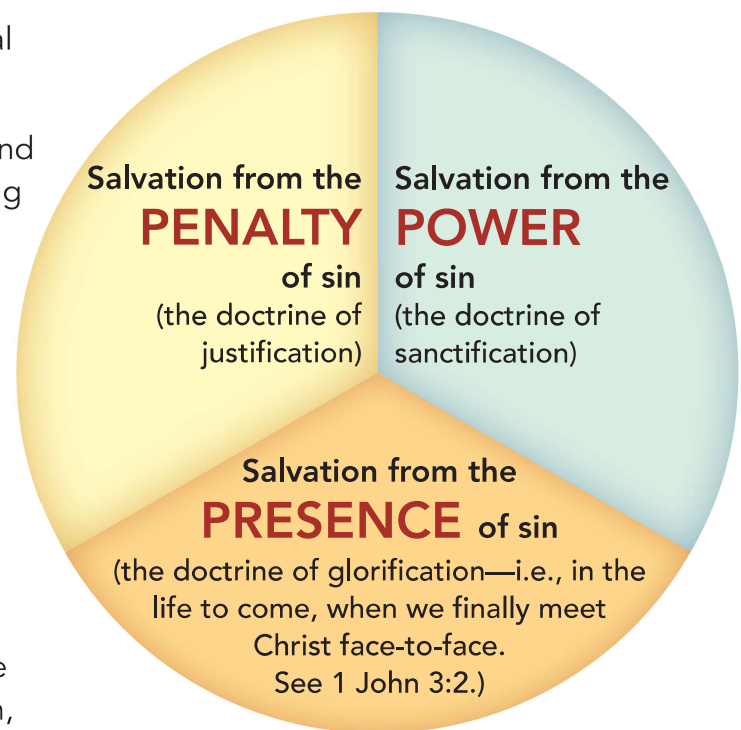
New means different. It hints of surprise and tantalizes us with the possibility of breaking out of old ruts. New almost always means an upgrade—thus the overused marketing phrase “new and improved.”

The promise of the gospel is that faith in Christ brings new (and improved!) life—right here and right now.

- ▶ A lot of people see religious faith as being mostly about one's past: “For much of my life I lived in terrible ways. But then I heard the good news of Jesus. I trusted him, and he forgave all my sins.”
- ▶ Or they see salvation as being primarily a *future* thing: “Because of Jesus, when I die, I'm going to heaven!”

While both of these things are true, there's also the fact that salvation has incredible implications for everyday life in the present!

Theologians like to say that salvation has three aspects:



It is this second aspect we primarily want to concentrate on in this study. We want to look at the phenomenal changes brought on by “so great a salvation” (Hebrews 2:3). The gospel doesn't only address our former lives, and it doesn't merely provide eternal life when we die. The gospel is also about new life *now*.



So Great a Salvation!

Salvation through Jesus Christ brings staggering benefits, but among the more obvious blessings are

- ▶ a new life
- ▶ new standing with God
- ▶ a new identity
- ▶ a new nature (and thus new desires and new struggles!)
- ▶ a new power to live as we should!

Key Terms about Salvation

Term	Meaning	Scripture
Condemnation	Humans, because of their sinful nature and actions, deserve divine wrath/eternal judgment. Without Christ, we are all <i>condemned</i> because of our sin.	Romans 8:1
Redemption	God paid the price to recover us from our slavery to sin. God <i>redeemed</i> us from being condemned.	Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7
Imputation	God “charges” a believer’s sin to Christ’s “account” and credits that person’s “spiritual account” with Christ’s righteousness. God <i>imputed</i> our guilt to Christ.	Romans 5:12–19
Justification	God declares condemned sinners “not guilty” by virtue of his grace and their faith in Christ. They have been <i>justified</i> .	Romans 5:1; Galatians 2:16
Regeneration	God grants spiritual life to those who are spiritually dead. Their lives have been <i>regenerated</i> , given new life.	John 3:5; Titus 3:5
Conversion	God enables sinners to experience <i>conversion</i> and turn from sin to God.	Acts 15:3; 26:18
Reconciliation	God restores his rebellious creatures into a right relationship with himself. We are <i>reconciled</i> with God.	Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21–22
Adoption	God <i>adopts</i> us and makes us his children—members of his forever family—by his grace and through our faith.	Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5
Sanctification	God’s work throughout a believer’s life of making believers holy, like Christ. We have been <i>sanctified</i> by Christ’s sacrificial death.	Romans 6:19; Hebrews 12:14
Glorification	God’s perfect finish, after death, of the work he began in us at the time of regeneration. Once <i>glorification</i> takes place, we will sin no more.	1 John 3:2



Bible Study

New Life

1. Read Ephesians 2:1–10. What does it mean that non-believers in Christ are “dead in . . . transgressions and sins” (v. 1)? How does it make you feel to know that apart from Christ, we are “separated from the life of God” (Ephesians 4:18), but that when we trusted in Jesus, “God . . . made us alive with Christ” (Ephesians 2:4–5)?

New Standing with God

2. Read Romans 5:1–21. In the same way we all became sinners as the result of the actions of one man (Adam), we can be justified before God through the acts of another (Jesus). What are some of the things these verses tell us we can enjoy as a result of our new standing with God?

New Identity

When we accept Christ we are given new names, a new identity. We are now beloved, accepted, forgiven, chosen—we are children of God.

3. Read Romans 8:5–17.

- a. Read verses 14–16 again. What does it mean that we are children of God?

- b. Now read verse 17 again. As an heir of God and co-heir of Christ what does this verse say we share in with him?



Who Does God Say We Are?

The New Testament describes the new identity of a disciple using a variety of word pictures. Which of these new identities suits you best and why?

Disciples are called or likened to:	Scripture	Meaning
Fishers of men	Matthew 4:19	We are called to “fish for people” with the net of the gospel.
Salt	Matthew 5:13	We are to live in a way that makes people thirsty to know God; we are to act as a preservative in a corrupt society.
Light	Matthew 5:14–16	In a dark world, we reflect God’s nature and shine for him.
Branches	John 15:5	As branches connected to the Vine, Jesus, we bring his blessing/fruitfulness to the world.
Stewards/ Servants	1 Corinthians 4:1–2	We are managers of God’s good news, gifts, resources, and blessings—ultimately responsible and accountable to him.
Ambassadors	2 Corinthians 5:20	We are representatives of Christ’s kingdom to the lost people of this world.
Saints/Holy people	Ephesians 1:1	We are God’s holy ones—by virtue of what Christ has done for us.
Citizens of heaven	Philippians 3:20	Our allegiance is to God and his kingdom—not this world.
Soldiers	2 Timothy 2:3–4	We are engaged in a battle—not against people—but the spiritual forces of evil.
Athletes	2 Timothy 2:5	We are to live self-controlled lives and train ourselves to be godly.
Farmers	2 Timothy 2:6	We sow God’s word faithfully in order to reap an eternal harvest.
Living stones, a spiritual house	1 Peter 2:5	We are God’s dwelling place; his modern-day temple.
A priesthood	1 Peter 2:9–10	We may draw near to God—and we have the privilege of helping others do the same.
Foreigners, exiles	1 Peter 2:11	This world is not our home. We are only passing through.



New Nature

4. Our memory verse for this lesson says:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

How would you explain this idea to an eight-year-old kid?

5. Read and ponder these two passages:

- ▶ “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20, NASB).
- ▶ “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:3–4).

The great reformer Martin Luther once said, “The moment I consider Christ and myself as two, I am gone.” What do you think he meant by this? Why is a believer’s union with Christ so important?

New Desires (and New Struggles)

6. Consider these two statements from the apostle Paul:

- ▶ “So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me” (Romans 7:21–23).

- ▶ “For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh” (Galatians 5:17).

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul said believers in Christ are brand new creations. If that’s true, why do we still have evil desires in us?

It has been said that sanctification, growing more like Christ, is not really the process of becoming something new. Rather, sanctification is the lifelong process of becoming who we are in Christ. It is learning to live from our new, true hearts. And we do this despite still having our old, unredeemed “flesh,” which is incapable of transformation or upgrading (see John 3:6; 6:63; Romans 7:18).

New Power

- Choose an area of your life with which you are experiencing some difficulty (your marriage, a tough family situation, a broken friendship, a struggle with temptation or addiction, a need to forgive someone, etc.). Now read and consider these two passages:
 - ▶ Ephesians 3:16 says, “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.”
 - ▶ Second Peter 1:3 promises, “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

How can the prayer and the promise in the verses above help you with the problem situation you chose?



Take-Home Reflections

The Spirit's Work in Our Transformation

The Holy Spirit . . .	
Enlightens our minds	Jeremiah 31:34; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10; Ephesians 1:17-18; 1 John 2:27
Purifies our emotions	Romans 5:5; 8:15; 2 Corinthians 7:10-11
Empowers our wills	Romans 8:13; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians 5:16
Sensitizes our consciences	2 Corinthians 7:10-11; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Timothy 1:5
Satisfies our longings	Isaiah 55:1-2; John 4:13-14; 2 Corinthians 3:6
Expresses our needs	Romans 8:26

New life in Christ, new standing with God, a new identity, a new nature (and thus new desires and new struggles!), plus a new power to live as we should . . . what a mind-boggling list! It sounds too good to be true.

But it is true—all this and more. And this fact of being a new creation means you can't go on living the way you used to live because, well, you're no longer the person you used to be! As a child of God, you have a brand new nature that contains divine spiritual DNA—meaning the desire to do right *is* within you (whether you feel it or not).

We will never live as Jesus calls us to live until we see ourselves as Jesus sees us. Identity determines activity.

According to the promise of the gospel, if you have put your trust in Jesus, you have been utterly, absolutely, completely transformed. Do you dare believe it?



Life Application

An important part of discipleship is learning how to apply God's truths to your life. Below are just a few ways you can start thinking about what you've learned and apply it to your daily life.

1. Memorize our memory verse:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

2. Read Paul's letter to the Romans in one sitting.

3. Bounce one of these questions around (over coffee or lunch) with your discipleship partner or group:

- ▶ How can a person embrace their new identity in Christ and begin to focus on a new way of living?
- ▶ What are the implications of the Bible's claim that Jesus Christ is life itself (see John 11:25; 14:6; Colossians 3:4; cf. John 10:10)? Is guilt more a subjective feeling or an objective condition or state? Why?
- ▶ How could it be that the death of a Jewish-carpenter-turned-rabbi on a Roman cross on a Friday afternoon some 2,000 years ago makes it possible for a person today to be "acquitted by God" on all counts of sinfulness?
- ▶ In what specific ways do you struggle to see yourself as Christ sees you?
- ▶ Where do you see newness in your life because of Christ? Where would you like to see more newness?

4. Meditate each morning and evening on the affirmations under "In Christ I am . . ." You might even say them aloud.



Because of my trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the following things are true of me (even if I don't sense them or feel them):

In Christ I am . . .

- ▶ Chosen by God! (Ephesians 1:3–8)
- ▶ Forgiven of all my sins—past, present and future! (Colossians 1:13–14)
- ▶ Justified—I am righteous in the sight of God! (Romans 5:1)
- ▶ Free from any and all condemnation! (Romans 8:1–2)
- ▶ Bought with a price—I belong to God! (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)
- ▶ A brand-new creation—my old life is no more! (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- ▶ God's child! (John 1:12)
- ▶ Born of God and the evil one cannot touch me! (1 John 5:18)
- ▶ More than a conqueror—eternally secure in the love of God! (Romans 8:31–39)
- ▶ United with/joined to Christ forever! (1 Corinthians 6:17)
- ▶ A friend of Jesus! (John 15:15)
- ▶ Seated with Christ in the heavenly realm! (Ephesians 2:6)
- ▶ A citizen of heaven! (Philippians 3:20)
- ▶ Complete in Christ! (Colossians 2:9–10, NASB)
- ▶ Hidden with Christ in God! (Colossians 3:1–4)
- ▶ A branch of Jesus Christ, able to bear fruit for God! (John 15:16)
- ▶ A member of Christ's body! (1 Corinthians 12:27)
- ▶ Given direct access to God's throne of grace! (Hebrews 4:14–16)
- ▶ Able to approach Almighty God with freedom and confidence! (Ephesians 3:12)
- ▶ God's "masterpiece," created for good works! (Ephesians 2:10, NLT)
- ▶ A dispenser of grace to others in the body of Christ! (1 Peter 4:10)
- ▶ Able to accomplish whatever God asks me to do! (Philippians 4:13)
- ▶ Guaranteed that God works for my good in all life's circumstances! (Romans 8:28)
- ▶ Sure that God will complete the good work he has begun in me! (Philippians 1:6)