

The Life of a Christian

Part 4

So far in our studies we have seen how we can become a Christian step-by-step by following the plan of reconciliation that God has for us in the death on the cross of His Son Jesus Christ.

We have seen that the first step in that plan was to change the direction of our life, acknowledge our sin and accept the spilt blood of the Son of God as a substitute for our own deserved death.

We then saw that our old nature that we inherited from Adam had to die as we joined Christ in His death on the cross by crucifixion and being buried, now dead, with Christ in the waters of baptism.

We were then to start a new life, this also is to be linked to Jesus Christ in His resurrection.

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

This unity with Christ is to be an eternal relationship.

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

Alive in this new resurrected life, from the waters of baptism, is also linked with Christ.

Paul understood this new life he was to live but as we saw in the last study he found it impossible to live this way by his own strength.

The only possible solution was to *“live in the Spirit”*.

How do we do this in real practical terms?

John 16:7 [NIV] *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”*

Christ had told His disciples that He was about to leave them; this came as a shock to them and they were sad. These words were to be of comfort to them but also the solution of how they could *“live in the Spirit”*.

John 16:13-16 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”*

Christ was referring to the Counsellor [one who is beside you to guide you] the Holy Spirit [who has always inspired the written Word of God].

How would the disciples, and we as Christians who are included in this, see Christ again?

Christ had already explained this to His disciples but it had not yet sunk into the minds.

John 14:15-21 [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. Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

It is through our accepting the Holy Spirit into our lives that we will “see” Christ.

Notice there is a three step progressive relationship with the Holy Spirit.

- a) **Know the Holy Spirit**, accept as part of our religious creed that He exists as person in the Triune Godhead.
- b) **The Holy Spirit lives with us** is our experience of being taught by the Holy Spirit through the understanding of the scriptures.
- c) **The Holy Spirit will be in us**. This is an intimate relationship that will allow, as a result of our total submission to His Will, the Holy Spirit to create in us a new baby then a maturing child of God.

Jesus referred to this intimate relationship in His discourse with Nicodemus, a Pharisee.

John 3:1-8 [Message Bible] *“There was a man of the Pharisee sect, Nicodemus, a prominent leader among the Jews. Late one night he visited Jesus and said, ‘Rabbi, we all know you’re a teacher straight from God. No one could do all the God-pointing, God-revealing acts you do if God weren’t in on it.’ Jesus said, ‘You’re absolutely right. Take it from me: Unless a person is born from above, it’s not possible to see what I’m pointing to, to God’s kingdom.’ ‘How can anyone,’ said Nicodemus, ‘be born who has already been born and grown up? You can’t re-enter your mother’s womb and be born again. What are you saying with this ‘born-from-above’ talk?’ Jesus said, ‘You’re not listening. Let me say it again. Unless a person submits to this original creation, the ‘wind hovering over the water’ creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life, it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom. When you look at a baby, it’s just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can’t see and touch, the Spirit, and becomes a living spirit. So don’t be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be ‘born from above’, out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it’s headed next. That’s the way it is with everyone ‘born from above’ by the wind of God, the Spirit of God.”*

God has given us a physical example of this spiritual act of re-birth.

When a wife submits to her husband in a sexual act of unity, as God commanded them to do, the result is a new life is started in the womb of the wife.

Genesis 2:22-24 [NIV] *“Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’, for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and **they will become one flesh.**”*

The commanded physical union between a husband and wife.

Genesis 1:26-28 [NIV] *“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, **“Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”***

The command to be fruitful to create new lives as a result of the sexual union between a husband and wife.

The birth of Jesus Christ as the Son of Man was the union of the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin pledged to marry Joseph a descendent of King David.

Luke 1:31-35 [Message Bible] *“But the angel assured her, ‘Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus. He will be great, be called ‘Son of the Highest’. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; He will rule Jacob’s house forever, no end, ever, to his kingdom.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘But how? I’ve never slept with a man.’ The angel answered. ‘**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; Therefore, the child you bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God.**”*

Our new life will be a spiritual birth to a life created by our union with the Holy Spirit.

For this to happen we have to submit totally to the will of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 12:1-3 [Message Bible] *“So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life, your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life, and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognise what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. I’m speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it’s important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.”*

Just as it is what the husband gives to the wife in the physical union that creates a new being. So it is what the Holy Spirit does in us that creates in us a new being that is acceptable to God the Father.

Our only part in the wonderful union with the Holy Spirit is our submission to Him and our seeking not to grieve Him so that He can complete His work in us.

Ephesians 4:30-33 [Message Bible] *“Don’t grieve God. Don’t break His heart, His Holy Spirit, moving and breathing in you is the most intimate part of your life, making you fit for Himself. Don’t take such a gift for granted. Make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting [bitterness], profane talk. Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you.”*

Paul continues to give practical advice to our living this new life in Christ.

Ephesians 5:1-10 [Message Bible] *“Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behaviour from their parents. **Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love.** Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn’t love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that. Don’t allow love to turn into lust, setting off a downhill slide into sexual promiscuity, filthy practices, or bullying greed. Though some tongues just love the taste of gossip, Christians have better uses for language than that. Don’t talk dirty or silly. That kind of talk doesn’t fit our style. Thanksgiving is our dialect. You can be sure that using people or religion or things just for what you can get out of them, the usual variations on idolatry, will get you nowhere, and certainly nowhere near the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of God. Don’t let yourselves get taken in by religious smooth talk. God gets furious with people who are full of religious sales talk but want nothing to do with him. Don’t even hang around people like that. You groped your way through that murk once, but no longer. You’re out in the open now. The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around. Get on with it! The good, the right, the true, these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours. Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it.”*

This can only be done by the Holy Spirit being active within us, causing us to mature from babies in Christ to full mature children of God.

Galatians 5:22-26 [Message Bible] *“But what happens when we live God’s way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard, things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good, crucified. Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.”*

All of these godlike characteristics are the result [fruit] of our intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit. Just as a child takes on the character of their parents because of spending so much time with them, so time spent with the Holy Spirit will result in His God-like characteristics “*rubbing off*” on us.

How do we develop this intimate relationship?

In the same way as we develop a relationship with any other human being.

We converse with them. We listen to what they say, come to know how they feel and how they react to certain situations in life. They listen to us as we express our feelings, our hopes and fears to them.

How do we have a conversation with the Holy Spirit?

Psalms 46:10 [NIV] *“Be still and know that I am God.”*

It is essential that we are willing to spend time every day in a place where the pressure and noise of day-to-day life is unable to penetrate.

I started to set this time and a place aside every morning some years ago and it has made a dramatic change in my life.

This place is nothing grand, it is a shed at the bottom of my garden, where I now have my Bible translations, commentaries, concordances and other Bible study helps.

I originally called it “*my snug*” as I found comfort and peace there.

But now I have re-named it “*the power house*” because it is where I receive spiritual guidance and energy from my union with the Holy Spirit.

This is my time and place of prayer and study of God’s Word.

Ironically this shed at the bottom of the garden is next to the local church graveyard, so I am not disturbed by the nearest neighbours, they are all peacefully asleep, and I am reminded every day of how short life is.

Ephesians 5:11-16 [Message Bible] *“Don’t waste your time on useless work, mere busywork, the barren pursuits of darkness. Expose these things for the sham they are. It’s a scandal when people waste their lives on things they must do in the darkness where no one will see. Rip the cover off those frauds and see how attractive they look in the light of Christ. “Wake up from your sleep, Climb out of your coffins; Christ will show you the light!” So watch your step. Use your head. Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times!”*

Here we have a strong warning from God our Creator, that how we use this limited lifespan is very important, we need to get our priorities right.

Matthew 6:19-34 [Message Bible] *“Don’t hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or, worse!, stolen by burglars. **Stockpile treasure in heaven**, where it’s safe from moth and rust and burglars. It’s obvious, isn’t it? **The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.** ‘Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a dank cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have! **You can’t worship two gods at once.** Loving one god, you’ll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. **You can’t worship God and Money both.** If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don’t fuss about what’s on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds. Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion. do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen colour and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them. If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers, most of which are never even seen, don’t you think he’ll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I’m trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with **getting**, so you can respond to God’s **giving**. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. **Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now**, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. **God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.**”*

Here is a philosophy for life that will really “pays off” in the end. Those who have **not tried and experienced** this different way of life see it only as “sacrificing today for an unseen tomorrow”, but what a great tomorrow we are promised in God’s Word, The Holy Bible. The book for everyday living, the Guide to Eternal Life.

Philippians 3:3-21 [Message Bible] *“The **real** believers are the ones the Spirit of God leads to work away at this ministry, filling the air with Christ’s praise as we do it. We couldn’t carry this off by our own efforts, and we know it, even though we can list what many might think are impressive credentials. You know my pedigree: a legitimate birth, circumcised on the eighth day; an Israelite from the elite tribe of Benjamin; a strict and devout adherent to God’s law; a fiery defender of the purity of my religion, even to the point of persecuting Christians; a meticulous observer of everything set down in God’s law Book. The very credentials these people are waving around as something special, I’m tearing up and throwing out with the trash, along with everything else I used to take credit for. And why? Because of Christ. **Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant, dog dung. I’ve dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him.** I didn’t want some petty, inferior brand of righteousness that comes from keeping a list of rules when I could get the robust kind that comes from trusting Christ, God’s righteousness. I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally, experience his resurrection power, be a partner in his suffering, and go all the way with him to death itself. If there was any way to get in on the resurrection from the dead, I wanted to do it. **I’m not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me.** Friends, don’t get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I’ve got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward, to Jesus. I’m off and running, and **I’m not turning back.** So let’s keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision, you’ll see it yet! Now that we’re on the right track, let’s stay on it. Stick with me, friends. Keep track of those you see running this same course, headed for this same goal. **There are many out there taking other paths, choosing other**”*

goals, and trying to get you to go along with them. I've warned you of them many times; sadly, I'm having to do it again. All they want is easy street. They hate Christ's Cross. But easy street is a dead-end street. Those who live there make their bellies their gods; belches are their praise; all they can think of is their appetites. But there's far more to life for us. We're citizens of high heaven! We're waiting the arrival of the Saviour, the Master, Jesus Christ, who will transform our earthy bodies into glorious bodies like his own. He'll make us beautiful and whole with the same powerful skill by which he is putting everything as it should be, under and around him."

Here are the thoughts and conclusions of apostle Paul a man who had experienced the best that this world could offer. But once he was convicted by the Holy Spirit, he considered all his past life as useless compared with the life he now lived as a disciple of Jesus Christ and a life yielded to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Christ.

When we choose this new way of life we should seek others who are likeminded, so that we can learn to practice this new way of life first with those who are likeminded, then with all we meet in our day-to-day life.

Galatians 6:1-10 [Message Bible] *"Live creatively, friends, if someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might be needing forgiveness before the day's out. Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law. If you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived. Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life. Be very sure now, you who have been trained to a self-sufficient maturity, that you enter into a generous common life with those who have trained you, sharing all the good things that you have and experience. Don't be misled: No one makes a fool of God. What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others, ignoring God!, harvests a crop of weeds. All he'll have to show for his life is weeds! But the one who plants in response to God, letting God's Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life. So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith."*

I am seeking to join the apostle Paul and others who are today seeking to live this new way of life that will go on for ever.

How about you!!