

SEEKERS

Bible Study Course

Lesson Eight

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

A Christian is one who has died to sin (repentance), been buried with Jesus in baptism, and raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4); he has been *“born again”* (John 3:5). Since we have died to sin, we must reckon ourselves *“to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:11). Will sin no longer be a problem?

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Romans 6:12,13).

We have been *“crucified with Christ”* (Galatians 2:20). We have put to death the old man of sin; our new life must be different from our old one. There are many changes that we must make. We are to be holy-because God is holy (1 Peter 1:14-16). God has not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

Because of our repentance, God washed away our sins when we were baptized (Acts 22:16); we were added to the body of Christ, the Church (Acts 2:47). God has promised, based on our faith and obedience, to forgive us of our sins (Acts 2:38) and to give us eternal life (Hebrews 5:9). We have faith in His promise (Colossians 2:12).

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Paul compares the Christian life to one who is changing clothes (Colossians 3:1-17). Imagine the worker who has spent all day laboring in the fields. His hands are full of dirt, and his body is covered with sweat (sin makes us spiritually filthy). He comes home and removes the dirty clothes. Then he washes away the sweat and grime with soap and water and puts on clean clothes. When we repent of our sins and are baptized, we remove the old clothes and are washed in the blood of Christ.

Would we want, again to put on those old garments that are still dirty and sweaty? Of course not. We want to wear the fresh, clean clothes of righteousness. We want to be the holy people God has made us (1 Peter 2:9). Following are verses in which Paul make this comparison:

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1-3).

Even our thinking must be changed (2 Corinthians 10:5). We must become more concerned about heavenly (spiritual) matters than the things of an earthly nature. We must put to death those ideas that would lead us back into sin: *“fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry”* (Colossians 3:5).

Paul next talks about those things which, like dirty clothes, we must remove.

“But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Colossians 3:8-10).

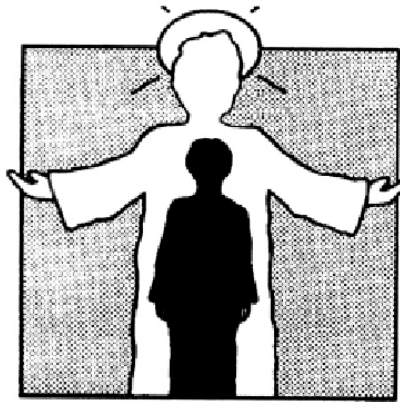
The list of things in verse 5 concerns problems of a sexual nature; those listed in verses 8-10 concern attitude and speech. When we become Christians, we make changes in our lives. The

way that we think changes. Life is viewed in light of eternity, not just in terms of daily living. Those things that are most important now relate to Jesus and His church. We know that Jesus is coming back for His people (alive or dead) to take them to heaven. Jesus is our life (Colossians 3:4). Until the time He returns (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9), we must devote ourselves to Him.

Our attitudes must be different had. We must control anger rather than expressing it for all to see. We must watch what we say: a filthy cleansed soul. Our tongues should not be used for corrupt speech or to deceive people. Truth cannot tell lies.

But Christianity is more than just attitudes, and actions. We must put what God wants us to wear.

"Therefore, as the elect of God, tender mercies, kindness, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, if anyone had a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you must also do."



from the sinful ones we once were. Our mouth should not be found in a way that is not to be used for corrupt speech. Certainly people devoted to God

are putting off the old thoughts, and actions, and putting on the new clothes that God

holy and beloved, put on the new clothes that God

"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful" (Colossians 3:12-15).

Changing oneself is not easy. Pride must be changed into humbleness of mind; anger must be changed into kindness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiveness. Selfishness must be changed into love. Becoming a Christian means becoming a new person—not only in relationship to God, but to other people, also. We are to conform ourselves to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Even if we must suffer for righteousness' sake, we are to follow His example (1 Peter 2:21-24).

The new life also brings a freshness to all earthly relationship. It means we will be better husbands and wives (Colossians 3:18-21; Ephesians 5:22, 23). We will be better servants (workers) and masters (Colossians 3:22; 4:1). We will be better citizens (1 Peter 2:13-17).

How glorious it is to be a Christian, a new person with better earthly relationship! The greatest blessing of all is to be one of God's children walking in the light, rather than one of Satan's walking in darkness.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Obligations

If you have been baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you have many blessings and also many obligations or duties. The first one is to put God first in your life (Luke 14:26-33; Matthew 22:37-39). The second one is to *"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* (Philippians 2:12).

Then you must *"love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matthew 22:39). You have obligations to your brethren in the church as well as to those who are not Christians. All brethren are to *"love one another"* as Christ loved us (John 13:34,35; 1 John 4:7,8). There are a number of passages that speak of ways to help each other, such as of teaching, admonishing, encouraging and serving one another (Ephesians 5:19; Hebrews 3:13; Galatians 5:13, and many others).

What about those who are not Christians? How should we treat them?

"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be

with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:5,6)

Paul said that he was debtor to all men; he owed them the gospel (Romans 1:14), so do you if you are a Christian. Most of all, in dealing with those who are not believers in Christ, we must remember that we are in the world as individual representatives of our Lord. We must live in such a way that others see a true picture of Him.

If you have not yet obeyed the gospel, please consider carefully that your sins have earned you eternal damnation, but God wants you to have eternal life (Romans 6:23).

Contact someone in the churches of Christ and ask him to baptize you for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). You will then be a part of the church you can read about in the Bible, a part of the church for which Christ died. As you grow in the faith and walk the Christian walk, God will richly bless you.

The lifestyle of the Christian:

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

“Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God,

“and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-meditate on these things.

“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:4-9).