

# A New Life for Old People

THIS article is not concerned with hardening arteries or softening brains. It has nothing to do with pensions, politics or medicines.

And yet, its purpose is to point to a new life for old people. You will observe that we are not thinking of Old People and Young People, but Old People and New People.

## Old People and New People

You may say, 'How do I know whether I am an Old Person or a New Person?'

It is hoped that when you have finished reading you will be able to tell. God knows – because it is in relationship to God that a man or woman is either Old or New. This is the great dividing line that God has drawn through the world. Those on one side are Old and those on the other side are New.

All through the Bible we find contrasting terms to describe people who are New and people who are Old. Being in Christ on the one hand and being afar off on the other. Being in the spirit or being in the flesh, being New or being Old, being alive or being dead. This article examines how we can change

from being dead to being alive, in our relationship with God.

It is something that God has to do for us. The very essence of the Gospel is that God has taken the initiative. God Himself has built a bridge from His side – all we have to do is to walk across and to trust in Him. And if you do that the Bible says that you are not afar off, but you are near to God.

## The Old Man

In the Bible the expression 'the Old Man' is used to indicate the state of a man or woman without God. It always means the person of the old, corrupt human nature,

the inborn tendency to do evil, which is in us all.

For example, the apostle Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus:

*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; ... [but] be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according*



to God, in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:17-18, 23-24).

We see then that according to the Bible, Old People may not be wilful and deliberate sinners, it is just that they have never realised that in the sight of God they are sinners.

They trust in their own goodness and fail to acknowledge their need of God's mercy. They are good in their own eyes because they are guided by self rather than by a humble recognition that of themselves they can do nothing and are in fact in great need of God's infinite love and grace.

This is the Old Man, and such are Old People who must enter into a New Life – 'putting on the New Man', as the apostle styles it. Not just doing better than you did before, not just improving your outlook on life – but New Life – a different kind of person altogether, which God will form in you by the operation of His word in your heart and mind.

## The New Man

God's promises are given to those who believe and accept His salvation in Jesus. These people look for "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

When the Lord Jesus returns to reward all of his servants, they are to be given a new name (Revelation 2:17). In vision in the book of Revelation the saved ones are portrayed singing a song – it is called a New Song (Revelation 14:3). The message of Jesus



that was to be written was this – "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). And so the way that Jesus has opened for us to come to God is called a "new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20).

Old things in the language of the Bible are those things which are fleshly. Things which serve for a time until they are superseded by better things. Old things pass away, they are of this age. New things are of God, eternal and undefiled, and do not pass away. Take for example 2 Corinthians 5:17:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

That is God speaking to us. And we can depend upon it. A Being who can swing a world out into space, hold it up and cause it to move in its orbit age after age, can be depended upon when He tells us something.

He says, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation." That person may not feel he or she is very new. They will be called by the same name and live at the same address and do the same job, but God says they are new creatures.

God says this, and we can believe Him. *“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18)*. The message of the Bible is that the person who comes to God as a sinner and is baptised, is just as though they had never sinned, they are washed clean in the blood of Christ their saviour. They are a New Creature and start a New Life.

## Baptism

To the Christians in Rome who had recently turned from their old way of life and embraced salvation in the name of Jesus, Paul said:

*Our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin... And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:6, 18).*

If you read Romans chapter 6:2–10 you will see what had happened to them. They had been baptised in water, buried in water as the apostle says, and in so doing they had recognised certain truths concerning themselves and their Old Life and concerning their relationship to God in a New Life.

The apostle says that in being buried in the water they had in symbol crucified the Old Man, because in fact they recognised it to be no good at all in the sight of God. The apostle told them they had been buried with Christ by their baptism.

This is the spirit in which baptism must be approached. It is a humiliation before God, not an achievement; a surrender to Him, not a milestone of progress. Baptism is not the public award of a certificate that we have successfully passed an examination in scriptural knowledge. There is no glory in baptism. It is not calculated to enhance our dignity. When men and women are baptised, they are not saying “see how good I am”, for we are not good and our going down into the water is a confession of it.

Christ in his crucifixion made it plain that he put no confidence in the flesh – he showed us what God’s opinion is of the Old Man. The apostle Paul says, *“those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24)*, and this bids us to be ashamed



of what we were before and show it in our baptism.

## The New Life

But although baptism is a humbling ritual, there is room for exaltation of the right sort. For the apostle tells us that in submitting to baptism we are not only symbolically buried with Christ in the tomb but in rising from the water we are in symbol rising with Christ from the tomb. Although the death of Jesus was a shocking death, his resurrection was a mighty triumph, and in baptism we share in both the shame and the glory.

The simple truth is that the man or woman who has in symbol shared in the resurrection of Christ in baptism and has thereafter walked in the New Life, will by God's grace share in the resurrection from the grave when Jesus Christ returns to the earth to establish the Kingdom of God. They will then walk in the power of eternal life throughout the ages of eternity.

Those who have refused to be buried with Christ and be raised with him now in baptism – those who have refused to be partakers of the New Life now – will not be able to have eternal life in the age to come.

The person then who rises from baptism is a new creature and has entered into a New Life. In the words of Jesus, they have been 'born again'.

*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).*



## Justified

The wonderful, tremendous truth that comes to the man or woman who accepts God's salvation in Christ and is baptised is that their sins are forgiven:

*I will remember their sins no more (Hebrews 10:17).*

The Bible calls this 'justification'. One of the most sublime blessings of the New Life in Christ is being someone who God forgives and no longer considers sinful.

*Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity (Psalm 32:2).*

It is crossing over that dividing line, of which we spoke in the beginning. From being afar off we are near; from being in the flesh we are in the spirit, from being Old Men and Women we are New Creatures, from being dead we are made alive, from being sin's servants we are God's children.

This is justification. And God does it for us and not we ourselves.

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