



discover new

*Uncover the new life that is found in God
as He lives in us*

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Published by HopeChannel

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Typeset in Univers

Printed in Australia by Signs Publishing Company®

Unless otherwise stated all Bible texts are from the **New King James Version**

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In 2009, actor Bruce Willis starred in *Surrogates*. Set in the future, the film depicted a world where people could, connected to a machine right from the comfort of their own homes, live their lives through robot surrogates. These robots were all beautiful, sexy, macho, smart, whatever the person wanted. You could live a whole new life, have a whole new identity, be whoever you could never otherwise be - all the while hooked up to a machine in your own bedroom.

In the story, Willis, the human Willis - chunky, bald, and ageing in contrast to his young, full-of-hair, and sleek surrogate - began having doubts about letting a robot live his life while he spent his life strapped in a contraption.

In one scene, the chunky, bald, and ageing Willis talks to his surrogate robot wife - young and stunningly beautiful - about the two of them going away, in the flesh, on a vacation. The surrogate wife asks: *You mean, leaving our units at home? Are you kidding?* When he complains that they don't spend much time together anymore, the surrogate wife says that they spend time together every day. He answers, *Yes*, but that they do it as surrogates, and so *it's not the same*. Staring into his eyes, his wife responds, *It's better*, and then walks out of the house, leaving her fleshy spouse - called Meatbags by the robots - standing there, unhappily alone.

LIFE CHANGES

Though just another Hollywood flick, *Surrogates* raises an interesting question that all we meatbags struggle with, and that is: *Are our lives what we really want them to be?*

Maybe not everyone would necessarily shout *No!* - though many, unfortunately, would. But most of us, however, would admit there are aspects of our lives that we wish were different, wouldn't we?

As we have been studying through these booklets, we are sin-damaged creatures living in a sin-damaged world, in the midst of a real battle - a great controversy between good and evil. We all have issues - physical, emotional, spiritual, relational, financial, whatever - issues that at times could make us wish we were someone other than who we presently are.

Sometimes, too, we find ways to escape - or we try to. More often than not, those escapes don't work either.

BORN AGAIN

However, there's good news in all of this - the good news of what Jesus has done for us. Though we have seen already that we have been forgiven in Christ, that our past wrongs have been wiped clean, that we can stand before God as if we have never sinned - the gospel is a gift that keeps on giving. And one of the most important gifts we have is a new life in Christ.

Think about it. How could you go from being in a state of condemnation, of guilt before God, of facing eternal ruin, to one where you now stand perfect in the sight of God, completely forgiven, having the condemnation wiped away, and having the promise of eternal life - and not have your life change here and now?

You couldn't. And the good news is that you don't. When you accept Christ, you have a new life.

Imagine a prisoner sitting on death row for 20 years suddenly being given a pardon. He's now legally declared forgiven, the charges against him dropped. Is he going to still sit in jail? Of course not! He's going to walk out and begin a whole new existence.

That's exactly what happens with us when we accept Jesus as our Saviour. Christians sometimes call this change the new birth.

Look at these texts:



There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him. Jesus answered and said to him, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:1-3

Notice the imagery - born again. Birth implies entry into life. To be born again, then, implies another entry into life. And, in the Bible, this entry is into a new life, a life in Christ that is radically different from the old one.



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



Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:4

Having accepted Jesus, having given ourselves to Him, we now have a new start, a new beginning, a new life. We have been born again, not into

the same life we have lived before, but into a new one, one in which we live by faith in the promises of God to us, and among those promises is that, through the working of the Holy Spirit in us, our lives will be changed.

HEIRS

Another image that is used in the New Testament is that of adoption. In the Roman world, the world where the New Testament unfolded, it was common for people to adopt others into their family, giving them all the rights and privileges as if they were actually born into that family.

Thus, in that context, using imagery his readers would understand, Paul wrote:



For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Romans 8:15-17

When someone is adopted, they become part of a new family, a new home. It's the beginning of a change, often a radical one too. Think of a child languishing in an orphanage in some developing country who is adopted by a loving well-to-do family in Melbourne or the like. This child's life will be changed, and in a big way too.

It's the same thing with us when we follow Jesus with all our heart, mind, body and soul. We become what the Bible says in numerous places - *heirs* of the most wonderful inheritance possible - eternal life in Christ.



That having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:7



And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:29

Becoming an heir to something that, at one time, wasn't yours, again gives the idea of how much we are changed through faith in Christ. We don't need robot surrogates to have a new existence. We need a life-changing experience with Jesus instead.

HOLY SPIRIT POWER

The Bible, too, is very clear that this change isn't anything that we can do for ourselves, any more than we could save ourselves from our own sins. Time and again the Bible talks about the Holy Spirit, the very presence of God Himself, working in us to bring about these transformations.



There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:1



For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living

in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:3-5

When we surrender ourselves to Christ, the Holy Spirit, which already was working in us - otherwise we could have never made the surrender to begin with - continues to work in us, convicting us of sin, pointing us to righteousness, and giving us the power to change the way we live. See 1 Corinthians 12:3.



Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth).

Ephesians 5:6-9



But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-25

THE ROAD AHEAD

No question, a person who has a born again experience, a person who has given himself or herself to Christ, who has made the surrender, has in a sense died to their old life, and that results in a new life in Him.



What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ... Knowing this, that 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. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.

Romans 6:1-4, 6-8

This says clearly there is death to our old life and a new life in Jesus. This is real, this is powerful, this is so much of what it means to be a converted Christian.

At the same time, too, these changes don't always happen spontaneously. Though there are accounts of people who, the moment they gave their hearts to Christ, become instantly free from some powerful addiction, bad habits or lifestyle, the Christian walk is a work-in-progress. It's a daily experience, a daily struggle, a daily surrender. We have to make a choice,

a moment-by-moment choice, to put away the things that we know are wrong, are bad, and are sinful, and live as God would have us to. And sometimes we fail, but we are not cast off, not forsaken, because we can find forgiveness in Jesus.

That's what God's grace is all about.

And the great news is that we are promised that if we do these things our lives will be changed - and for the better too. Through prayer, through Bible study, through communion with God, the new life we have in Jesus becomes more and more real in us.

Through reading the Bible we will learn what God's will is for our lives, we will learn what is right and what is wrong, we will learn to understand what is important in life and what isn't. And we will come to know for ourselves the God who has done so much for us.

Through prayer, which is like the opening of our heart to a friend, we can commune with God. He hears our prayers, and He cares about our concerns, and by being *faithful in prayer* (Romans 12:12 NIV), we can come to know for ourselves, personally, the reality, love and nearness of our Lord, who will change us. Through prayer, we can draw close to God and receive the power promised us to put away the old things and put on the new.



Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

Colossians 3:9,10

This is God's promise to us, and it's a promise that millions of Christians can testify to as real. That's because Christ has changed and is continuing to change their lives.

Look at this promise:



Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6

And this one:



But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:18

You don't have to be a believer to see it. Two men were having a public debate about the merits - or demerits - of the Christian faith. The Christian posed this challenge: *Suppose you're walking down a city street late at night when a group of five young men walk out of a building right behind you. Would you feel safer if they had just come from a bar, or from a Bible study?*

HEALTH AND WEALTH?

When you accept Jesus and are born again, that doesn't mean that suddenly all your problems will vanish. There is, unfortunately, the *Health-and-Wealth Gospel*, which gives the idea that if you are a true follower

of Jesus then, miraculously, your bank account will grow, your health problems will vanish, your relationships will all become wonderful, and you will even get better looking and sexier.

That's a false gospel. No question, Jesus will change our lives, and for the better too, but that doesn't mean all our problems will go away. It means, instead, that we have a foundation, a hope, a surety, which is God Himself, to help us cope with the trials that, inevitably, come our way.

In this epic story of planet Earth, the moment our first parents distrusted God and placed their trust in the serpent - Satan - God set the stage for the future. He said:



And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed ...

Genesis 3:15

Enmity simply means hatred, or a state of hostility. God said he would put this enmity between *you* (Satan) and *the woman* (God's people); between Satan's *seed* (people only born naturally) and *her Seed* (born again people). So born again people should expect hostility.

And history is testimony to the accuracy and truthfulness of God's declaration. The enmity reached a climax on the cross when Jesus - the Seed of the woman - met the serpent - Satan - in deadly combat. And believers in God, born again Christians, are always the target of Satan's attack. The enmity still exists, and will always exist until Jesus comes again.

Perhaps the greatest example is the story of Job that we looked at in an earlier booklet. Even God admitted that Job was *a blameless and*

upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil. Job 1:8 Yet Job faced an unbelievable onslaught of suffering and pain, even though he was a great and faithful man of God!

The apostle Paul wrote about his own experiences:



Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

2 Corinthians 11:25-28

Where's the health and wealth there for Paul who, by the way, wrote many of his letters - not from a mansion that he got by following the so-called *Prosperity-Gospel* principles - but from a Roman jail?

As these studies have been showing, the Bible teaches that we are all in the midst of a great controversy between good and evil, Christ and Satan, and the battle rages. None of us is immune, and that includes those who have given their hearts to Christ and whose lives have been changed by Him.

Only a perverted reading of the Bible teaches that the new life one finds in Jesus is automatically a life of health, wealth, prosperity and worldly success. What one finds, instead, is that life is still filled with trials, suffering, disappointments, sorrow, loss, and pain. But amid it all we have

the wonderful hope and promise of God's love, God's care, and a peaceful mind. We have the assurance that whatever we go through, it's not meaningless. His promise is that He will never leave us or forsake us. See Isaiah 41:10. In addition we have this hope, the guarantee of eternal life in a brand new world.

Look at this promise:



And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

This doesn't mean that all things are good. All things are, definitely, not good. The world is full of evil - evil is battling for control of the world. It means only that if we love God, if we are surrendered to Him in faith and obedience, He can bring good out of anything - even the worst of things that come our way.

And that knowledge alone and how we respond to it, in faith, forms part of the new life that we have in Jesus Christ. Our relationship with God is always one of faith; and He calls on us to trust Him. The more you know Him the more you can trust Him. It's never too late to start your journey of faith in God.



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