



discover loyalty

*Uncover the life changing decision
that signals our personal choice in the epic story*

Copyright © 2012 Adventist Media Network

Published by HopeChannel

Written by Clifford Goldstein

Edited by John Gate & Sue Robinson

Art direction by Jared Madden & Shelley Poole

Layout by Elena Janakijovska

Typeset in Univers

Printed in Australia by Signs Publishing Company®

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

For more information about this series, visit www.beyond.info



discover loyalty

The short story writer - known as Saki - penned a tale called *The Lost Sanjak*. It was about an Englishman whose life had come crashing down around him, and he wanted a new start, but just didn't know how. Then, walking home one night, he found the corpse of a Salvation Army captain who had been badly mauled, apparently hit by a speeding carriage. Spontaneously, he changed clothes with the corpse, and put his papers on it. The corpse would be identified as him, and he could go away, starting a new existence as someone else. At least that was the plan.

Unfortunately, the dead man had not been killed by a hit-and-run carriage, but rather had been murdered. To make matters worse, someone wearing a Salvation Army captain's uniform had been seen in the area, and was now the prime suspect. In other words, he himself - supposedly the murder victim - was also the suspected murderer!

Saki's story tells us what most people already know - it's not so easy getting a new start in life.

NO CONDEMNATION

The Bible also talks about a new life - a new start, a new beginning - but it is something that, unlike the man in Saki's story, we cannot do ourselves. This new life comes, instead, only through Jesus - through what He does for us and in us.

As we have seen, one of the key themes of these booklets has been the great news - the amazing news - which is the promise of justification by faith. It is, beyond doubt, the most important Bible teaching, and it says that, no matter our past, no matter our sins, we can stand before God

perfect in Jesus Christ - not because of what we have done but, in fact, despite what we have done. The perfection comes because of what Jesus has done for us, in that the perfect life He lived is credited to anyone who claims it through faith. And, thus, no matter how sinful our life has been, we are viewed by God as having the perfection of Jesus Christ. And this is how we, though fallen, can be made right with God.

Hence, the amazing promise:



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

No condemnation? Why? Is it because these people had become sinless, or perfect, or had they somehow been changed enough to where they lived lives that were so good they were no longer condemned by God?

No, the condemnation was taken away because they had reached out and, by faith and in faith, claimed the righteousness of Jesus Christ as their own. And the great news is that, through the wonderful provision of the gospel, anyone who does that is credited with the righteousness of Jesus. His righteousness, His holiness, His perfection, becomes theirs, and they stand forgiven and justified before God. And, again, it's not by our own works, which is impossible, but by faith in Jesus and His works for us.



Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:20-24

All this leads to a simple question. Can we go from being condemned by God to eternal death for our sins, to being forgiven and justified, and not be transformed? Said another way: After all that God in Christ has done to save us - how then shall we live?

It's like a prisoner who is pardoned, even from the death sentence, and released. Whatever the paper shuffling involved in a government office miles from his cell, the result will radically affect him. The pardon isn't just legal paperwork. It becomes the subjective experience in the prisoner's life. After all, he walks out of the jail - a free man! If that's not a radical change, what is? Though the pardon itself was accomplished outside and away from him, his life has been, indeed, greatly changed by it.

It's the same with us. When we're no longer condemned by God's law, our life changes. And that change, however subjective, however personal, begins with what Christians call - the new birth.

BORN AGAIN

In one of the most famous texts, Jesus - speaking at night to a religious leader in ancient Israel - said, *Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* John 3:3

Jesus is very clear here - unless you are *born again*, that is, unless something new happens to you - you can't see the kingdom of God. In other words, you can't have salvation.

Is Jesus teaching something different than salvation by faith alone? Of course not. Instead, He's teaching that the inevitable result of being justified - of being saved by faith - is a whole new life in Him, a new life characterised by the phrase born again.

After all, if birth is the beginning of one life, then what is being born again but the beginning of a new one?

And that is what happens to anyone who has given themselves in faith to Jesus, claiming His righteousness as their own. The condemnation is removed, and they stand pardoned, forgiven, and justified before God. And their lives are changed as a result. Again, how can we pass from death to life, from alienation to reconciliation, from guilt to pardon, and our lives not be changed?

Look at these texts:



He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13-14



In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence.

Ephesians 1: 7-8



And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

Colossians 2:13

Redeemed by His blood, our trespasses forgiven, delivered from the power of darkness, being made alive together with Him - these things cannot happen to a person, and that person's life not change.

No wonder Paul writes:



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

Through what Jesus has done for us, not only our standing with God changes, but our life does as well. We have a whole new existence, a new life in Him. And, according to the Bible, this new life, this new existence, is symbolised by the ritual of baptism.

BAPTISM

In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul spent the first five chapters making essentially two points:

Firstly, we are all - Jews and Gentiles - sinners. Secondly, salvation for all - Jew and Gentile - comes only through faith in Jesus Christ and His righteousness, which is *the righteousness of God*. Romans 3:21-22

Paul, then, in chapter six, writes the following:



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.

Romans 6:1-4

From Chapter 6 onwards, Paul takes all this and brings it down to the personal, individual level of what it means, both personally and practically, in the life of the person who has accepted what Jesus has done for them. Not only have their sins been pardoned and forgiven, but through the power of God working in them they have, by faith, died to their past sinful life, they think of it as dead, and now have a whole new life - a new birth in Jesus.

Read again what Paul says in those texts. By accepting Jesus, by accepting His life, His perfection, His holiness, we have a new life. And this happens when we die to self and live for Him.

Baptism is the outward expression of this inward choice.

DEATH BEFORE LIFE

In the New Testament, the English word *baptise* comes from a Greek work - *baptizo* - which implies immersion, because it comes from another Greek word - *bapto* - which means to dip in or under water. The New Testament evidence clearly points to immersion in and under water as opposed to sprinkling.

For instance, when John baptised Jesus - He did it, not because He needed to be born again, but to be our example - the Bible says:



It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptised by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.

Mark 1:9-10

He was baptised *in the Jordan* and then he came *up from the water*. These verses make sense only if talking about immersion.



Now John also was baptising in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptised.

John 3:23

... because there was much water there. If baptism were mere sprinkling, all one would need would be a cup of water - nothing more.

Note: Sprinkling is not baptism. Sprinkling came to replace baptism in the dark ages. The good news of justification by faith had been gradually replaced with a teaching of justification by ritual or works. And so to be sure babies were not lost before they were baptised, they sprinkled them. Baptism does not save us - Jesus does. Baptism is the sign of the choice we make when we accept Jesus. It's important. Jesus says it is a sign of loyalty.

Romans 6 talks about us being *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. Romans 6: 4, 6-7

Look at the imagery of crucifixion, death and burial. All this is symbolised by the act of going under the water - the death of the former self, the old sinful self being buried with Christ, the old man, the former person being crucified with Him.

What does that mean?

When we accept Christ, when we accept what He has done for us, we make a choice. By faith we believe that Jesus died for us - that when Jesus died we died!! To personalise it, replace the *we* with *I* - Christ's death becomes my death. Notice this:



For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

His death is counted as our death. We claim that by faith. We paid for our sins, when Jesus died for us!!

So we have a new way of thinking now. We consider our old sinful way of life as dead. In that sense we have been *crucified with Christ* (Galatians 2:20), which means what we have just read in the verses above - dead to self, freed from sin, because the *old things have passed away*. 2 Corinthians 5:17 Baptism, the going under the water, the immersion, symbolises the crucifixion of the old life.

It is not only a death but a burial, for we are *buried with Him in baptism*. Colossians 2:12 As a burial follows a death, so when the believer goes down into the watery grave, the old life, which passed away when they accepted Jesus, is buried.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Of course, baptism is not only going under the water. We also have to come up, symbolic of the new life we now have since we have given ourselves to Christ.



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



And be ... ***alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Romans 6:11

Newness of life! This is the change that begins in us after we have been justified, and our sins are forgiven. Like the prisoner pardoned, we walk away, free - free from condemnation, and free from the slavery of sin.



But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Romans 6: 17-18

Notice the idea of being a slave of sin. This is an important point. All through this series we have talked about the great controversy - the battle between good and evil that rages, not only in the world but in our hearts as well. A person who has given himself or herself to Christ, and has been baptised - a symbol of their death to their way of life and a new one in Christ - doesn't instantaneously and automatically somehow become sinless. It's just that now they have new motives, new purposes, new desires, aims and goals, even if the battle with self still rages, and even if they sometimes fall. It's the new mind and heart that God promised.



I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26



If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:8

It's just that now, connected to Christ, we can have victories that we didn't have before. We can be freed from devastating and destructive habits. We can be free from having to fall for Satan's temptation to sin. We are now fully on Christ's side. We have switched allegiances.

Again, this doesn't mean that the great controversy still doesn't rage inside us; it doesn't mean that temptations won't come, and it doesn't mean we won't ever fall.

GRACE FOR THE CHRISTIAN

To sin as a born-again Christian, though, is not the same as to live in sin, or to be a slave to sin, as we were before our new life in Christ. A believer in Jesus, therefore, mustn't lose hope and must never give up if they do sin.

Grace and forgiveness aren't just for the unsaved, the lost, the worldly. Grace and forgiveness are for born-again-baptised Christians as well. It's a daily experience.

A new birth, a new life in Christ - even after baptism - doesn't guarantee that we won't sin. It just means that, in our new experience with God, we will be sorrowful for our sin, we will repent of our sin, and choose through the promises offered to us not to do it again.

But if we do, we can still find forgiveness and pardon at the cross. We can still claim the righteousness of Jesus for ourselves - we have to, because it's our only hope. That's the great news of the gospel - as long as we don't forsake Jesus, He won't forsake us.

Indeed, being a born-again Christian, baptised in Christ, means that we can claim the myriad promises of what God will do in us if we let Him.

Like this:



No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Or this:



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

Philippians 1:6

And this:



But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Romans 6:22

But it also means that we can claim the promise of the gospel, of grace, of salvation, if we do sin.

Like this:



My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

1 John 2:1

Or this:



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

THE BAPTISED

Jesus Christ died for us. He offers us complete pardon for anything we have ever done, or will do. He offers us His righteousness instead of our own unrighteousness. He offers us a new life in Him, one in which we are free from the condemnation of sin and the power of it to dominate our lives.

The decision to accept Jesus as our Saviour - our personal hero - and our choice to follow him obediently in baptism, is a significant event in our own epic story. It is an event where we publically show to the watching universe whose side we are on in this cosmic battle. And baptism is our declaration that we have claimed God's promises for ourselves.



NEXT IN THE SERIES:



Uncover the abundant life through health and wellbeing

BEYOND THE SEARCH – DISCOVERY SERIES

- 01 Discover Tomorrow
- 02 Discover Meaning
- 03 Discover Truth
- 04 Discover the Saviour
- 05 Discover Insight
- 06 Discover Hope
- 07 Discover Eternity
- 08 Discover Peace
- 09 Discover Steps
- 10 Discover New
- 11 Discover Freedom
- 12 Discover Rest
- 13 Discover Authenticity
- 14 Discover Immortality
- 15 Discover Restoration
- 16 Discover Justice
- 17 Discover Judgment
- 18 Discover Allegiance
- 19 Discover Safety
- 20 Discover Loyalty**
- 21 Discover Wellness
- 22 Discover Intimacy
- 23 Discover Tribute
- 24 Discover Belonging

