

New Life in Christ 2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

Introduction - Everybody Wants a Fresh Start

There is something within us that loves the thought of a new beginning.

We celebrate New Year's Day because it feels like a clean page. We move into a new home and think, “This is a new beginning.” A young couple gets married and begins a new life together. Someone begins a new job, moves to a new community, or starts a new chapter of life.

There is something wonderfully hopeful about the words: **“You can begin again.”**

But there's a problem. **We can change our surroundings without changing ourselves.** We can move to another town - but take the same heart with us.

We can make new resolutions - but discover the same old weaknesses. We can turn over a new leaf - only to discover that underneath, it's the same old life.

The Gospel offers something infinitely greater than a fresh start. Jesus Christ doesn't merely give us a new page. He gives us a new life.

That is what Paul declares in our text: *“If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come...”*

Today we have witnessed a beautiful picture of that truth. Michael has gone down into the waters of baptism and has risen from those waters.

The water did not save him. **His baptism did not make him a Christian.** He entered those waters because Jesus Christ had already done something in his life.

Baptism says publicly: “I have trusted Christ. My old life belongs to the past. Jesus is my Saviour and Lord. And from this day forward, I want the world to know that I belong to Him.”

That's why this is not simply Michael's message today. It's a message for every one of us. Because Paul's words begin with one of the most inclusive invitations in all Scripture.

Christ Offers New Life to Anyone *“Therefore, if ANYONE is in Christ...”*

Don't pass too quickly over that word: ANYONE.

Paul doesn't say, “If any religious person.” “If any respectable person.” “If anyone who has lived a reasonably good life.” “If anyone who has never made a serious mistake.” **He says: “If anyone.”**

That means the door of God's grace stands open. Whatever your past. Whatever your failures. Whatever your regrets. Whatever sins you carry. Whatever other people know about you. Whatever nobody else knows about you.

Anyone can come to Christ. Paul himself was living proof.

Before becoming a Christian, he made it his life's work to eradicate Christianity from the face of the earth. Yet on the road to Damascus when Paul encountered the risen Christ, **everything changed.**

The persecutor became the preacher. The enemy became the apostle. The man who tried to silence the Gospel eventually gave his life proclaiming it. **Why? Because nobody is beyond the reach of Jesus Christ.**

There may be someone here today thinking: "I've waited too long." "I've wandered too far." **But the Gospel says: ANYONE.**

Jesus said, "**Whoever** comes to me I will never drive away." - John 6:37.

New Life Begins "In Christ" *"If anyone is IN CHRIST..."*

Those may be the two most important words in the verse: **In Christ.**

Paul doesn't say, "If anyone becomes more religious..." "If anyone starts attending church..." "He says: *"If anyone is IN CHRIST."*

Christianity is fundamentally about a relationship with a Person - Jesus Christ.

You can know Bible stories. You can sing hymns. You can attend church. You can believe that Jesus existed. You can know all about Jesus without ever knowing him.

Paul describes salvation as being *"in Christ."* That means I am joined to Him. Through His death and resurrection my life is made right before God.

His people become **my** family. His future becomes **my** future.

Think about Michael's baptism. When he went beneath the water, we saw a picture of Romans 6: *"We were therefore buried with Jesus through baptism into death..."* And when he came back up: *"...we too may live a new life."*

That is why immersion is such a magnificent Gospel picture. **Down into the water** - buried with Christ. **Up from the water** - raised with Christ.

Baptism doesn't make someone a Christian. It shows that someone belongs to Christ.

Christ Does What We Cannot Do for Ourselves - *the new creation has come..."*

Notice Paul's language. He doesn't say: "If anyone is in Christ, he becomes a slightly improved version of himself." **He says: A NEW CREATION.**

That is radical language. Think back to Genesis 1. **God created something where nothing had existed before.**

Paul deliberately uses creation language to describe our salvation. **Why?** Because becoming a Christian isn't simply self-improvement. It's God's transforming work.

Where religion says: "Try harder." **The Gospel says: "Trust Christ."** Where religion says: "Clean yourself up and perhaps God will accept you." Jesus says: **"Come to Me, and I will make you new."**

That is the miracle of salvation. Jesus doesn't merely renovate the old life. **He gives us new life.**

Christ Deals with Our Past "The old has gone..."

Those are wonderful words. The old has gone.

Paul isn't saying that when you become a Christian you suddenly forget everything that happened before. Nor does he mean Christians instantly become perfect. We still struggle. We still face temptation. We still stumble. We still need daily forgiveness and grace.

But something decisive has changed. Our past no longer defines us. Our sins no longer condemn us. Our failures no longer have the final word. **Why? Because Christ dealt with them at the cross.**

Satan may accuse us. Our memory may accuse us. Others may remind us of our failures. Sometimes we may even condemn ourselves. **But if we are in Christ, God says: Forgiven.**

Think about Peter. He denied Jesus. **Not once. But three times.** And the third time he cursed and swore that he didn't know Him. Surely Peter's ministry was finished.

But after his resurrection, Jesus found Peter. He restored him. And essentially said: "Peter, your failure is not going to be the final chapter of your story." Weeks later, Peter stood at Pentecost and preached Christ - and about three thousand people were saved.

That is grace. **Jesus can redeem the very chapters of our lives that we wish had never been written.**

Your past may explain you, but it doesn't have to define you. In Christ: **The old has gone.**

Christ Gives Us a New Identity

What does this new creation look like? Christian growth is a journey with changes that don't happen overnight. **Michael will discover that.** We all have.

There will be victories. There will be struggles. There will be days when he feels spiritually strong. There may be days when he wonders whether he's making any progress at all.

But baptism isn't Michael saying: "Look at me. I've arrived." It's Michael saying: "Look at Christ. I belong to Him." **That is an important distinction.**

Michael isn't promising us that he will never stumble. He's declaring: "Jesus Christ is my Saviour, and I intend to follow Him."

And church family, that's where we have a responsibility too. Our responsibility isn't simply to applaud Michael today. **It's to walk with him tomorrow. Encourage him. Pray for him. Stand beside him.** Be examples of Christ before him.

Baptism isn't merely welcoming someone into water. It's welcoming them into a community of faith.

Christ Gives Us a New Direction "...The New Is Here!"

If Christ has given us new life, that new life should eventually become visible. **Not perfection. But direction.** There's a major difference.

Before salvation, we may have been walking away from God. **Now we're walking toward Him.** Sometimes we stumble. Sometimes we wander. Sometimes our pace is painfully slow. **But our direction has changed. That is discipleship.**

Michael's baptism is a major moment. But the Christian life isn't lived only in major moments.

It's lived on Monday morning. It's lived at work. It's lived at school. It's lived at home. It's lived when nobody is watching. It's lived when temptation comes. When prayers seem unanswered. When following Jesus costs something. That is what baptism declares: **I'm Following Jesus.**

New Life Gives Us a New Purpose

Paul doesn't stop at verse 17. Look at what follows: *"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."* Then verse 20: *"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors..."*

That's remarkable. Jesus doesn't merely save us **from** something. **He saves us for something.** And that something is for believers to become representatives of Jesus Christ in the world.

A Word Directly to Michael

Michael, your baptism today isn't the end of your story. It's the beginning of another chapter.

God has people for you to love. People for you to encourage. People for you to serve. People who may someday hear about Jesus because you were willing to tell them what Christ has done for you. You don't need a theological degree. You don't need to know every answer.

Start with your story: **"This is who I was. This is how I met Jesus.** And this is what He's doing in my life now." Nobody else has your testimony. And God can use it.

Today is a memorable day in your life. There may be photographs taken. There will be congratulations. You'll remember going down into the water and coming back up.

But years from now, when September 6 2026 is a distant memory, **remember what this day meant. You publicly said: "I belong to Jesus Christ."**

There will be days when following Him is easy. There may be days when following Him costs you something. There will be mountaintops. There will be valleys. **But the One who saved you today will still be faithful tomorrow.**

Keep your eyes on Jesus. Stay in His Word. Keep praying. Stay close to God's people. Serve Him.

Remember Paul's words: *"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion..."*

Today isn't graduation. **It's commencement.** The adventure of following Jesus continues.

A Word to First Baptist Church

My church family, Michael hasn't made this journey alone. And he shouldn't have to continue it alone.

Our responsibility toward him didn't end when he dried off after baptism.

Let's be the kind of church where younger believers find mature believers who will walk beside them. **Where questions are welcomed. Where failures are met with grace.**

Where Scripture is taught. Where prayer is real. Where Jesus is loved. And where people can grow into everything Christ calls them to become.

Invitation - Perhaps Today Is Your Day

There may be some here today who have never been baptized as a believer.

You've watched someone else take that step. **Perhaps the Holy Spirit is saying: “What about you?”**

The next time these baptismal waters are prepared, you could be standing here.

Jesus said: *“If you love me, keep my commands.”* - John 14:15.

Conclusion - The Greatest Words May Be “In Christ”

Let's close with our text: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”*

Think of these four words:

ANYONE - you are not beyond His reach.

IN CHRIST - salvation is found in Him.

THE OLD HAS GONE - your past does not have the final word.

THE NEW IS HERE - Jesus gives new life.

And that brings us back to what we've witnessed today.

Michael went beneath the water. **Buried with Christ.**

Michael came up from the water. **Raised to walk in newness of life.**

Every drop of water falling from him preached the same message: **Jesus Christ Makes All Things New.**

That is the life transforming Gospel message. **The old has gone. The new is here.**