

Baptism
Part 3
Risen With Christ
Romans 6:3-4
Pastor Charles Price

Jesus said, “Because I live, you also will live.” He also said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” It is the resurrection of Christ that gives power to the gospel.

And I want to read to you this morning from Romans Chapter 6. I am going to read just two verses. And if you have been with us in the last two weeks you will know that we have been looking into this one passage. And I am going to read these two verses to you again where Paul is writing about what it means to be united to Christ. And in so doing he talks about the meaning of baptism.

And in Verse 3 he says,

“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

These last two weeks we have talked a little about the meaning of baptism. Water baptism, as we know it, is an outward physical act that portrays an inward spiritual truth. The outward act is important but it is important only as it portrays that inner truth and experience.

And there are three movements that are part of baptism, that are pictured by baptism by immersion, which seems to be the best way to interpret how the New Testament is speaking about baptism (though we are not going to discuss mode of baptism or enter into any debate about that; that is a secondary thing).

But baptism by immersion gives graphic picture of what it means to, first of all, die with Christ (the act of going down into the water), being buried with Christ (being put under the water), and the third movement, being risen with Christ (coming up out of the water).

And this outward act of baptism was designed to portray this inner spiritual truth and reality of our union with Christ. And this inward spiritual truth is what we actually call the gospel.

Baptism is not something additional to the gospel; it is a portrayal of the gospel and that somebody has been united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, which is what the gospel of Jesus Christ is about.

There are two words that we use to describe the two main aspects of salvation. These two words are redemption on the one hand, and regeneration on the other. Now these are separate things.

Redemption means literally to buy something back. In the Old Testament it is used of buying things back to deliver them from evil in some way.

In the Old Testament it speaks of the redemption of slaves, for an example, the redemption of property, the redemption of fields, the redemption of animals, the redemption of people, even the redemption of nations - Israel is redeemed from Egypt. That is the picture in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament it refers to the act of salvation. So earlier in Romans 3:24 it says we

“are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

And there are other verses that say similar things.

This act of redemption is portrayed in the first part of baptism - our death with Christ, where we are united with Christ in His death where He satisfied the justice of God (we talked about that two weeks ago), and then we are buried with Him.

And as we talked last week, there is a finality to burial. It is over; it is done with. All our sin that was placed on Christ, not only did He die and we die with Him, but it is buried in order that then there might be a resurrection, not to the old life but to a new life.

And this of course is what the second word is about. The second word is the word regeneration. For what end are we redeemed? For what end are we rescued? In order that we might become regenerate, and the word regenerate means to impart life – more literally, to re-impart life. Regeneration presupposes there was life and it was lost and now it has been restored.

And the reason why we are redeemed, rescued, reconciled – all these are good words that explain the effect of the death of Christ – is not only that we might come out of our sin and guilt and failure but that we might become recipients of a new life in order that we live that new life.

You see our problem is more than that we are guilty, that we are sinful. That is true, but that is a symptom of something deeper. Our real problem is that we are spiritually dead. And to be spiritually dead means, in the words of the apostle Paul, we are separated from the life of God.

Now in order for that life to be restored to us we do need to be forgiven. And forgiveness is a wonderful thing. But forgiveness is a means to an end, that having been forgiven, the

decks having been cleared, the mess having been cleaned up, that we might then become recipients of spiritual life, which is the life of God imparted to us and lived in us by the Holy Spirit.

In Romans 5:10 (which is probably on the previous page to Romans 6 for you); Romans 5:10; it says this:

“If, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son” (that is our redemption), how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” (That’s regeneration.)

And Paul explains there that there is a ‘much more’ to the gospel than redemption. Having been reconciled to God through the death of His Son – much more. Here’s the purpose:

“Having been reconciled we will be saved through His life.”

And we need to understand this, not as some addition to the gospel, but as the whole purpose of the gospel, that the life of God is restored into human experience. We become spiritually alive.

Sometimes we talk about the gospel as though it is primarily about getting rid of our sin, so we are made clean and respectable, and then doing the best we can to live a good life.

I heard about a man who took his little boy, about 4 or 5 years old, to a baptismal service on one occasion. And as somebody was being baptized, the father tried to explain to the little boy what was going on.

And he said, “That man, what he is doing is he is saying he is sorry for the wrong things that he has done and he is going down into the water, and that is him saying he is sorry for all the wrong things that he has done. And then he is coming up and he is now going to live a good life.” That’s how the father explained it.

And the little boy listening to this said, “But why did the pastor push him under the water? Why didn’t he just spank him?”

Well the reason is that the gospel is more than just about getting a spanking. You know, you’re wrong, get it right, and somebody else took the spanking for us, which is the cross. That’s not what it’s about. It’s actually receiving a new life in order to live that new life.

You see if we understand the gospel as being primarily about getting us out of our sin and preparing us for heaven, then the big issue of the gospel is whether you have got an alibi when you stand before God that will get you into heaven. And if you have got a good alibi you have understood the gospel.

That isn't the gospel. If it is, then you get yourself ready to heaven; what happens next? Well, basically the idea is that you get bundled up into groups that we call churches, you get taught how to behave appropriately and we sort of get sprinkled with disinfectant once in a while to keep us clean. And then eventually we get washed up on the shores of heaven. And then you really start to enjoy the Christian life.

I actually read an article this week that illustrates this understanding very clearly. And I was surprised somebody had even put this into writing. But this is somebody writing about the meaning of salvation. And he says in this little thing I read,

“The spiritual life that we gain is not in the here and now, but it is in eternity. We receive it after our bodies pass away and we have died here on this earth. Now a great paradox or puzzle exists for us whenever we accept Jesus Christ. Our new eternal life is to take place in heaven, not here on earth. Whenever we accept Jesus Christ, we become eternal beings, just as Christ is eternal. But we are stuck here on this earth until our physical bodies pass away because our life here on earth is not our true life. That we will receive when we get to heaven, but we must live in the here and now according to the principles and rules of God’s kingdom.”

Now that is not the gospel. But that is written down by an evangelical pastor whose name I won't tell you as an explanation of the gospel.

Now what is true of course is that there are things to come that we do not enjoy in their fullness here and now. But spiritual life is not something we get when we die; spiritual life is that which we receive here and now, the life of God who comes to inhabit us and life within us. This writer has a gospel of redemption but no gospel of regeneration.

And what baptism portrays is that we have identified with Christ in His death and burial. Therefore we have been redeemed, we have been freed from our sin in order, as Romans 6:4 says, in order (this is the purpose),

“in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

That is, that the life of Jesus, the resurrection life of Jesus, might be imparted to us. There is this coming out element and coming in element in the gospel that baptism portrays. And this is the way baptism is spoken of right through the New Testament.

When Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10 about this he talks about the children of Israel when Moses led them out of Egypt, you remember they had been enslaved there for many years, and he led them through the Red Sea and then on through the wilderness to the land of Canaan. And when Paul is talking about this, he talks in 1 Corinthians 10:2 about how they were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. The cloud was a cloud which led them by day; we won't talk about that.

But he says there, “baptized into Moses in the Red Sea.” I think that is a very beautiful picture of baptism.

They went down into water on Egyptian territory where they had been enslaved for many years. They are stepping out of that territory of enslavement. They go into the water; their old master the slave masters (Pharaoh and his army) followed them to try and round them up and bring them back. But they came up the other side before they could grab them and bring them back; they came up onto new ground, onto a new land with a new purpose, with a new life. And they left their old master dead and buried behind them.

Now says Paul to the Corinthians, this is a picture of what baptism is. You come out of the old life in order to come into the new life. But so very often we are so quick to stress - and I understand fully why and necessarily so - the importance and value of coming out of the old life. We don't know always understand that the whole purpose is that we might come into the new life, that baptism is not just identification with Christ's death and His burial (so my sin is gone) but it is now a resurrection to walk in newness of life, in His life, that inhabits us.

Most of you know Dr. Gerald Griffiths who is here this morning, now retired as a pastor, but has been a pastor for many years on three continents. And he was telling me one day, if he doesn't mind me quoting this, that some years ago he was speaking at a conference in the United States (and by the way, I did ask permission before). And he was speaking at a conference in the United States and he spoke from the passage in Galatians 2:20 when Paul says,

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

So this new life I live I live in dependence upon the Son of God who now lives in me. Christ lives in me.

And he was invited while he was there to go and be interviewed on a radio program. And the interviewer, a young man who was a Christian believer, asked him some very good questions about his message.

“Well, what does it mean that Christ lives in me? What does it mean to live by faith in the Son of God in dependence on Him?”

And Dr. Griffiths was able to answer these questions and it gave him a great opportunity to explain the gospel. And at the end of the interview, he said to this young man, “Thank you for asking me these questions because they have really given me the opportunity to explain the gospel.”

And this young man said to him, “But I have never heard this before or understood it.”

So Dr. Griffiths said in effect, “Well, what gospel have you understood?”

“Well that Christ died for me and I confessed my sins to Him and I am forgiven and I am given the promise of going to heaven when I die. But I have never understood this new life, which is Christ living in me, and then living in dependence on him everyday.”

So Dr. Griffiths said to him, “Have you been baptized?”

And he said, “Yes.”

And so he said to him, “You shouldn’t have been baptized. They should have drowned you. You’ve only got half the gospel. They should have said alright, your gospel is crucified with Christ, buried, and leave you there.”

And you know, there are a lot of Christians who should have been drowned at their baptism because that is all they are interested in, in getting off the hook, getting out of hell into heaven, getting rid of my guilt, easing up my conscience, freeing me up with a clean sheet of paper to start again, and that’s it.

But there is a resurrection in the gospel and that resurrection is the impartation of the life of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said to His disciples in John 14 when He talked to them about the Holy Spirit who was going to come, and He said, “He is with you and He will be in you.” That’s the difference. It’s going to happen on the day of Pentecost.

And this Holy Spirit He described as another counselor. The word another used there is one of two words that mean another, but this word is a very particular word that means another of identical nature.

“So when I give you another counselor, the meaning of the word another is the counselor will be Myself, exactly who I am. It is the Holy Spirit who will come to live in you My life.”

And so they are interchangeable terms. Christ is in you; the Spirit is in you. If you go to the book of Ephesians it talks about living in the fullness of God in Chapter 3. It talks about arriving at the stature of the fullness of Christ in Chapter 4. And it talks about “be filled with the Spirit” in Chapter 5.

So in that one letter you have got the fullness of God, the fullness of Christ and the fullness of the Spirit. Are these three fullnesses? No, it’s the one fullness. It’s the fullness of God as the Holy Spirit lives in us the life of Jesus Christ. It’s the same life that comes to live within you.

That’s why Paul said to the Philippians,

“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.”

What is the power of His resurrection? That I am now living in the strength and power of a life – you look later in Romans 6 – that has died and therefore cannot die again. It has fully met the demands of sin but is now risen from the dead and now lives in me, the power of an endless life. And I want to know Christ from the power of that life operating in me.

Now so many, many Christians miss this. I missed it for a number of years after I became a Christian. And that’s why it means so much to me. Because this became the ingredient, the missing ingredient that changed my Christian life from being about as exciting as pushing a bus up a hill (which is not very exciting) to discovering there is an engine in the bus and we could rest in the presence of Christ within us.

I have a little booklet here that I first read many years ago and a number of folks on our staff have been reading this booklet. And it is written by a man called Charles Trumbull. It is called Victory in Christ and he explains something of his own story, how that he had been a Christian and in ministry for more than twenty years. But he was very frustrated with his own Christian life. He loved the Lord Jesus with all his heart. He tried his best to serve Him. He encouraged other people to serve Him. But there was no sense of power. People’s lives were not being changed as a result of his service. And he got increasingly frustrated.

And he heard somebody preach one day on that verse in Ephesians 4 that talks about growing in our knowledge of God to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. He said, “he was unfolding Christ in a way that was utterly unknown to me and I was amazed but I was also bewildered. Was the speaker right or was he wrong? I couldn’t tell.”

But it created in him an appetite to pursue what is this about. He was an American preacher but he went across to Edinburgh. This is now about a century ago. This book was written about 70 years ago.

And he was at a conference in Edinburgh when there was a session being offered called The Resources of the Christian Life. And he decided to go because he wanted to know what the resources for the Christian life were. He says,

“I expected him to offer a series of definite actions we might take for stronger Christian life like how to read the Bible and spend time in prayer. And I knew I needed these. But what he told us was something like this. ‘The resources of the Christian life, my friends are just this: Jesus Christ.’ I’ll add the word he doesn’t write here: period. That was all he said but it was enough. My heart leapt with a new joy.”

He talks about how he went to see the speaker and the speaker said,

“If only you would just assume His presence and trust Him.”

As I’ll say in a few moments, that doesn’t mean the Scriptures and prayer are not important in the Christian life – of course they are – they are the means by which we get to know Christ better, the means by which He shows Himself to us.

But it’s not a methodology, it’s not a spiritual discipline; it’s a person that is the resource of the Christian life. And Jesus told His disciples that in John 15. “I am the vine; you are the branches. As you abide in Me in the way that a branch is connected to the trunk, as you abide in Me and I abide in you, you will bear much fruit. Things will happen in your life. But without Me you can do - how much? - nothing.”

“You can know your Bible from Genesis to Revelation and you will accomplish nothing. You can spend time in prayer six hours a day; you will accomplish nothing unless the source of what you do is Myself, Christ.”

We participated this morning in the Lord’s Supper, the Communion. And when Jesus instituted that there was something He said which must have shocked His disciples. He took the bread (“This is My body. It’s for you. Take it; eat it in remembrance of Me”.) That didn’t shock them. I mean they had heard He was going to die. They didn’t take it seriously but it wasn’t new information He was giving them. Eating the bread was no problem.

But then He took the cup and He said, “This cup is the blood of the new covenant. This represents My blood.” And then he said, “Drink it.” That’s the bit that must have shocked them and I’ll tell you why.

No Jew ever drank blood. Blood was expressly forbidden to be drunk. Now why was blood forbidden to be drunk in the Old Testament, in the old Law? It is because blood is intrinsically unhealthy? Well, seemingly not.

I spent some time many years ago in Northern Kenya where there is a tribe of folks whose basic diet is camel’s blood and cow’s milk mixed together. And I saw them tie up the camel, slit a vein on its neck and catch the blood and mix it with the milk and eat it. I didn’t participate. I understand there are nutrients in blood that are good for you – a lot of iron. It’s not a health issue in the Old Testament.

The reason why blood was forbidden is stated in Deuteronomy 12:23:

“Be sure you do not eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat.”

The blood is the life says Deuteronomy 12:23. Leviticus 17:11 says the life is in the blood.

And the reason why under the Old Covenant they were not allowed to eat or drink blood is because there is no provision for life. That's why the word regeneration you won't find in the Old Testament. The Spirit was with people, as Jesus told the disciples in the Upper Room, but He will be in you; that's going to be the New Covenant.

Now He says, "this is the blood of the New Covenant and that means you can break the law, drink the blood. Because what is going to happen in this New Covenant is not simply your sin can be forgiven. It could be forgiven under the Old Covenant through the sacrifice of bulls and goats and their blood representing as a foreshadowing of Christ the sins of the people.

But now drink the blood. Now this New Covenant, it is the blood of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is I will put My Spirit in you. And yet although blood of course does have cleansing properties, the blood is also part of the cleansing of us because it is the life offered up in sacrifice, but now it is the life given to drink.

In other words, if we can make this distinction – and I make it only casually, but I think it is an important distinction – that the bread represents Jesus giving Himself *for* us. The blood represents Jesus giving Himself *to* us. The body given *for* us is to enable the life of Jesus to be given *to* us. "Drink the blood."

And the purpose, as Paul says back now in Romans 6, that

"We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Now notice the language there. Not that we receive a new life – we do that. Redemption and regeneration cannot be separated from each other in time. When a person comes to Christ and they are redeemed, they are reconciled to the Father; they receive that new life. But very often we do not understand that is what has happened. And the purpose is not just that we received the new life but in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. That is, we live in the good of that new life.

I didn't understand this for four years after I became a Christian. And my basic understanding, as I look back in retrospect, was that when I became a Christian I received three things.

Now some of you will have heard me say this before, but I don't think I ever said it from this platform, but it's part of my own testimony.

I have said this on a number of occasions, that I understood I received three things and I saw it this way: I received a ticket and a certificate and a catalogue.

Let me explain what I mean. The ticket said, “one way journey to heaven.” The certificate said, “This is to certify that Charles Price has had all his sins forgiven. Signed, God.”

So if you came to me in the early days of my Christian life, “Are you a Christian?”

“Yes.”

“What does that mean?”

I would have told you it means my sins have been forgiven and I am going to heaven when I die.

Then if you said to me, “Well what about now? I mean you probably don’t want to die yet.” (That was true.) “What have you got now?”

And my understanding was that I had what I can best describe as a mail order catalogue, which was this book, the Bible. And this book told me all the good things I could get from God and I had the idea that God had a sort of supermarket full of spiritual goodies and an errand boy called the Holy Spirit. And my job was to read the catalogue, put in my order (which is called praying) and the Holy Spirit would deliver the goods.

So for an example, I could read the catalogue and find out I could have love. Boy, I need some love. So I put in my order, pray and say, “Lord, would You please give me some love. I am not very loving. I need some love.” And I imagined the Holy Spirit being sent with a tube of love a bit like toothpaste, take the top off, squeeze it on my inside and go all lovey for a little while.

And then that would wear off. I would read the catalogue. I can have some joy. “Lord, please give me some joy.” I imagined the Holy Spirit coming with a bottle of joy a bit like a bubble bath mixture and you know, give it a good shake, take the top off, pour it on my inside and...joyful for a little while.

Then that would wear off. I would read my catalogue. I can have some peace. And I imagined the Holy Spirit coming with a tin of peace, a bit like a thick molasses, pries the lid off, pour it on my inside and go... oh...peace.

Then that would wear off. I would read the catalogue. I can have power. “Lord, I need some power. I need it on Saturday night at 7 o’clock. I am going to give my testimony on Saturday night at the youth meeting.” And I imagined the Holy Spirit coming with a stick of power, lighting the blue fuse, standing back and boom! And there’s power. And it would wear off after a while.

And my Christian life was me asking God for this, for that, the other. And then what changed my Christian life was the understanding that when I became a Christian God had only one thing to give to me. He gave me Himself.

And love is a fruit of the Spirit, joy is a fruit of the Spirit, peace is a fruit of the Spirit. You will receive power when? When the Holy Spirit lives within you.

And as Paul said to the Ephesians, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. What is left out of that? How have we been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ? Because Christ is in you, every spiritual blessing is simply an expression of the life of Jesus in you.

And living this new life, which is the purpose, which you have died with Him, been buried with Him, in order, says Paul in Romans 6, that as Christ was raised from the dead, you too might live this new life.

Living this new life is living in union with Christ in daily dependence upon Christ, that His character, His activity, His agenda begins to be expressed in us. Of course it is filtered through an old nature that we have until the day we die and so it has never seen its perfection in this life. It is true that we will, in perfection, know that in the future life.

But you know it's possible to receive a new life but to continue living the old life. And that's what the Scripture calls living in the flesh. It is living by human resources for human ends. And living in the flesh, when Paul talks about that in Romans Chapter 8, is not about running off with your neighbor's wife; it's about Christians trying to live the Christian life by their own human skill and discipline and ingenuity.

And he says in Romans 8:5

“Those who live according to the flesh”

Now the NIV has paraphrased that and used a phrase ‘sinful nature’, but I think flesh, which is the literal word, is probably the best word. The flesh means not the human body; that is not intrinsically corrupt in itself.

But all that I am, human sufficiency, all that I am apart from God – that's the flesh - me living in my own strength. And those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires. In other words, all they have is their own agenda, their own goals. They may look good, they may sound good, they may be good. But they are purely fleshly, purely human. And you can explain their lives and explain what happens with their lives, explain what they do, purely in terms of their ability, their skills and their discipline.

“But those who live in accordance with the Spirit” he goes on to say, “have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”

In other words, their concern is what is the agenda of the Spirit of God, what is He doing, what are His resources, what is He going to accomplish? And you will discover their

lives can only be explained by the fact that the Spirit of God is at work within them. You can't explain them by human terms.

And there are far too many Christians who should have been drowned because that is the measure of their Christian life. And they have never come through burial to resurrection, they have never come through thanking the Lord Jesus for the cross – vital, vital as that is – in order that they might enter into new life in new strength and new power.

What kind of life is that? We haven't time to talk about this now, but living by the flesh means that we live by laws and rules that we think are good. We live the way we assume other Christians expect us to live. Almost certainly when you live by the flesh, you start to take your reference points from other Christians as well and you try to conform, you try to fit in.

Whereas living by the Spirit means your reference point is the Spirit of God. That doesn't mean you go floating off and do your own thing because the Spirit of God always takes you back to the Word of God. In fact, the Word of God is the word of the Spirit of God; He is the One who inspired this.

And so we know the Lord Jesus Christ through His Word and we spend time in it and we know the Lord Jesus Christ through intercession and communion with Him.

And if we too are to live a new life, what does that new life look like?

Let me just tell you very briefly and we haven't time to talk about this, but this life first of all is a life of intimacy with God. It's a love relationship that we have with God, and therefore we spend time with Him, we spend time in His Word, we spend time in prayer. And do not tell me that you can live the Christian life apart from time with God in his Word and in prayer.

If we offer to anybody any kind of tactic, technique or process that bypasses time in the Word of God, it will not bring Christ in all His fullness into our lives.

That's why Colossians 3 says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly."

So it will be a life of intimacy with God. We can't pick it up by osmosis. You can't pick it up by having a Bible next to your bed that you never open. That won't do you any good. You won't pick that up just by coming to church once a week and hoping that somehow you can live off it for the rest of the week. You will live a very shallow Christian life.

And the area in which many of us need to grow is the area of our intimacy with God, our love relationship with Him. We talk about Christians have a relationship with God. My own experience of sitting and talking to a lot of people is they don't have a relationship with God at all. They believe in Him but there is no relationship.

They look at you dumbfounded when you say, “How has God been speaking to you lately?”

“Oh, oh, oh, oh.”

“Which part of the Word are you spending time in?”

There is one man who I meet from time to time and often said to me in the past (I haven't seen him for several years now), “where are you grazing at the moment?” By that he means, what are you reading in the Scriptures, where are you grazing? You know cattle graze; they just chew it up. Well, where are you grazing at the moment? Are you grazing in the Word of God?

It would be a life of intimacy with God. It would be a life of obedience to God. The perennial question of your life becomes what is the will of God? As you acknowledge Him in all your ways, He directs our steps, our paths. That's a promise the Word gives to us. And your concern is what is the will of God.

And we constantly surrender ourselves to His own agenda. Don't see that as something mystical, floating in some kind of cloud. Get on with life, but when your heart is “Lord, what is Your will?” you will find in the process of life God will give you all kinds of opportunities and connections and contacts and ways in which you can represent Him and serve Him.

It would be a life of dependence on God recognizing apart from Him we can do nothing. And so all we do is in dependence upon Him. That's the meaning of that verse,

“The life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God.”

That is, I live every moment in dependence upon Him where I exchange my weakness for His strength, exchange my foolishness for His wisdom, exchange by sin for His grace. And everyday it becomes a disposition of dependence, of trust.

And it will be a life of service for God because out of all of that will flow the fact that you are on His business no matter what you are doing. You may clock in 9 o'clock on a Monday morning and clock off at 5 o'clock on a Monday evening and the same on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Don't disparage that in any way whatsoever. That is where God has put you and you are on His service even in situations that you think have no relationship to God because you are in a totally secular environment. That's where God has placed you, and your eyes are open to the opportunities.

It's a life of intimacy with God, of obedience to God, of dependence on God, of service for God.

And the Christian life is not the result of our capacity to imitate God, but the result of His capacity to reproduce Himself in us. And that's what real righteousness is as opposed to self-righteousness.

And living by the Spirit is living in dependence upon Him no matter what the situation. This is not a special Christian life, you know; you sometimes see phrases like "the deeper Christian life" or the "higher Christian life", whichever way you want to go, down or up. This is the normal Christian life according to the New Testament.

Watchman Nee, the well-known Chinese writer, has said that the average Christian life is so sub-normal that the normal Christian life appears to be abnormal but this is the normal Christian life.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lutheran pastor who was put to death in the latter days of the Nazi regime in Germany, and he left behind a book he had written called "The Call to Discipleship" and he says in that book this: He says,

"Christ calls us to come and die. Christ wants all of us with nothing to be held back. One is either a disciple of Jesus Christ or they are not. There is no middle ground. And the true disciple is dying to his or her life as a whole and their old life is being replaced with the life of Jesus Christ."

Now let me ask you as I close, is this your Christian life? Bonhoeffer says there is no middle ground. We're not talking about perfection; we are talking about availability to God, in dependence upon Him, knowing that the source of my Christian life is His presence in me. Now it is radical, it is revolutionary, but it is real.

And the biggest enemy of the true full gospel is the half gospel that gets us off the hook, that turns the cross into a door mat in which to wipe your dirty feet to get into heaven, but that's period, it's purpose, when the full gospel is that we live in the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.

Now I am not sidetracking from baptism; I am explaining what baptism is because this is what Paul says here in Romans Chapter 6.

"We were buried with him through baptism into death in order that" (this is the purpose) "in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead ...we too may live" (not just have) "live a new life" (that life of intimacy, obedience, dependence and service.)

Baptism is the outward physical act that portrays this inward and spiritual truth. And I am so grateful for the grace of God and because we fail so often, and I fail so often, but this is the life that is the Christian life.

In all the frailty of our human condition, in all the corruption of our human old nature, which we keep in this life, the Spirit fights against the flesh; the flesh fights against the

Spirit. It's a daily battle. But nevertheless through it, the life of Jesus is designed to be expressed and shine and work and be the means of drawing other people to Himself.

Where do you stand with this? Is this the gospel you have embraced? Is this the gospel you need to embrace? Because as I understand it, this is the gospel of the New Testament, that as Bonhoeffer said, "there is no other, there is no middle ground."

I am going to lead you in prayer and then after we have prayed I am going to tell you two things that may help many of you here to grow in living this new life. Because I recognize there are many of us find there is a kind of – it's difficult to get traction, we're spinning wheels, we don't seem to be moving very much and I want to just tell you something in just a moment.

But first let's pray together and I am going to ask that we just have a moment of silence in which you can respond to Him. And perhaps the best response you can make is simply to say, "Thank You. You are sufficient for me. You are my strength, You are my life; fill me with Yourself and help me to live – not just to have, but to live this new life."

Lord Jesus I thank You for every person in this building this morning. We wouldn't be here if we didn't have an appetite to know You. Some of us are looking for You and You promise that those – everyone who seeks – finds. And therefore we thank You in advance that those who are seeking, as they seek for You will find you and experience You. And perhaps here this morning will be the moment in which You step into their lives in a way that is fresh and real as they confess their need of you, as they thank You for dying on their behalf and rising again to live a new life in them.

But for others of us Lord, we want to know You better but we do get so frustrated sometimes. But I want to pray for those here this morning who have been trying to live the right life but by their own strength. They love You, they want to serve You, but there is no power. They are living in the flesh without realizing it in many cases. Lord, bring us into that place of dependence on You where we live in obedience to You and dependence on You and love for You. And out of those deep inner parts in our own hearts where Christ will live and where Christ will fill us, may there flow life-giving blessings to other people. Help us we pray to live in this newness of life, and encourage our hearts with that; encourage our hearts that You are in business within us, we pray. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.