

*A New Beginning*  
*II Corinthians 5:17*

**INTRODUCTION**

Life can make a skeptic out of you. As the years go by there will be many disappointments. So many things that promise so much fail to come through in performance. Both people and things disappoint you. It can bring you to the point that you find little hope of things ever being better with reference to your life. You become a confirmed skeptic.

Growth in self understanding can also lead to despair. Honest evaluation of yourself can be discouraging. You find yourself yielding to pressures, giving into temptations, compromising principles, failing in resolutions, and losing hope of things ever being different. Instead of making the progress that you plan, you find yourself slipping in some important areas of your life. Oh how you wish that some way you might have an opportunity to begin life all over again. Surely you would do things differently the second time.

The desire to begin again become so intense in some that they will go to any end to attempt it. They will join weird religious groups, they will commit themselves to a hope of reincarnation, and a thousand different things. If they cannot begin again in this life, at least they will have the hope of beginning again in the next life. Do you feel this desire this morning?

Our text speaks to this kind of situation. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new." What a word! It is a word that awakens an immediate sense of hope. Is there some way that I can actually be created anew, and everything in my life be made new in the process? There is! This text set before us the essentials of beginning again. Human beings who have lost all hope can actually have the opportunity for a new beginning. Consider the words of this familiar statement with me.

***I. "IN CHRIST" IS THE PLACE OF NEW BEGINNING***

If there is a possibility of beginning again, where do you find it? "If any man be in Christ. This little phrase "in Christ" brings before us the distinctive reality of the Christian faith. To be a true Christian is to be in Christ. But what does this mean?

The Old Testament provides us some helpful illustrations of this truth. The Ark which Noah built is an illustration. The one place of safety and security was in the ark. Noah, his family, the different creatures survived the destruction of the flood because they were in the ark". The only hope we have of surviving the judgement that is coming upon the human family is to be "in Christ." Just as in the day of Noah you were either in the ark, or outside of the ark, so we are either in Christ or outside of Christ. Those of us who are in Christ know what it means to be a new creation, to have a new beginning.

Another illustration found in the Old Testament is that of the city of refuge. Whenever anyone was unintentionally responsible for the death of another person, they could flee to the city of refuge. According to the judicial practice of the day, someone would be after him for vengeance. He would not be safe from someone seeking revenge until he entered the city of refuge. These cities were set apart all across the land, so that no one was ever very far from such a city. When his life was in danger under these circumstances all that he had to do was flee to the city. As long as he was in the designated city, he was safe from the person seeking revenge. But he must be in the city. It did not help to be near the city! Christ Jesus is our city of refuge. When we realize that we are under the just condemnation of a Holy God, we can flee to Him for safety. In Him we are safe from the wrath of God. We are saved in Him.

Jesus spoke of this truth under yet another figure. He likened it to the relationship between the vine and the branch. To be in Christ is to be in Him like the branch

is in the vine. The relationship between the vine and the branch is so vital that the branch cannot live apart from the vine. To be severed from the vine is to be put to death. He is our only source of life and fruitfulness.

The experience by which we come to be in Christ is called in the Bible the New Birth. At the moment we flee to Christ for salvation, cast ourselves upon Him in commitment and trust, we are born anew. We are placed by the Holy Spirit in Christ. This vital union with Him is established. Only those who have been born again are actually in Christ Jesus.

We must not confuse this with being in the church. It is a tragic blunder to make being in Christ the same thing as being in the outward expression of the church. Many who are in the church have obviously never known what it means to begin again. They are unchanged and unmarked as far as the life of Christ is concerned. But the only place for beginning again is "in Christ". Are you in Him?

## **II. "NEW CREATION" IS THE NATURE OF THE NEW BEGINNING.**

This is a strong word. This term sets forth the radical nature of the new beginning. In a sermon from this text, the great Spurgeon contrasts this with other biblical images of God's saving work, and finds it to be the most radical image of conversion. A creation is a radical new departure. Salvation has been likened to healing, and it is. But a healing is a restoration of something to a healthy state. A creation is the importation of something that has never been before. Salvation is even likened unto a resurrection, but this too is not as radical as a creation. In the resurrections that we have in the scriptures it was primarily restoration to an old life and old relationships. This creation is completely new in kind.

In a real sense this is the only new thing since the record of Genesis one. Everything about us today is directly related to that *which God* created in the beginning. We bear a very distinct resemblance both physically and spiritually to the first man and the first woman God created. But in the new beginning there is a new kind of human being, one so radically new that it can be called a new creation.

We must not under emphasize this. In our zeal to make disciples we never forget that something radical happens in this new beginning. It goes so much deeper than the reformation of an old life. It goes so much deeper than just some changes in the outward performance of the life. It involves the importation of a new life, the becoming a new creation. It is a radical concept.

This word sets forth the divine nature of this work. Creation is uniquely the work of God. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Only the omnipotent God can make a universe out of nothing. He takes the utterance of His mighty Word and the moving of His mighty Spirit to bring into existence a universe. He is the Creator. This is one work of God for which there is no competitors. While it is true that modern man is attempting, successfully it seems, to bring into existence new forms of life in his test tubes, he is still not really a creator. In each case he is limited to the use of pre-existing materials. He combines these elements in such a way to produce a new form of life, but it is still really a part of the old. But if man thinks himself to be a creator, let us see him bring even one speck of dust into existence without the use of any pre-existing materials. But just the utterance of a word, let's watch him produce even one speck. He cannot do it. Only God can create.

The new creation is as much a work of God as the old creation. Man might as well take credit for the old as to take credit for the new. And surely the new creation is the greater expression of the creativity of God. In the old creation there was nothing to resist His word or to oppose His will. When He spoke, it was done. But in this new creation, it must be done in spite of the sinful resistance by man to the will of God. It must be done even though man stands in opposition to the word of God. The power and grace of our God has never seen a

greater expression than in the new creation, making of sinful man into a new creature!

Are you trying to make yourself a Christian? You are as likely to create a universe, as you are to make yourself a new creation. It is such a radical, new work that no one could ever do it except God. Your only hope of ever beginning life again is for God to do a mighty work in your life. He must make you the new creation. When He does it, it is done. Until He does it, it is not done. Has God done this kind of work in your life?

### ***III. "ALL THINGS NEW" IS THE EXTENT OF THE NEW BEGINNING.***

"Old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new." The "old things" passed away at that blessed moment of the new birth. The moment the Holy Spirit placed you "in Christ", the old was gone. Your relationship to the old will never be the same again. These same old things have been made radically new. This is a new state of being. "Have become" has in it the force of permanence.

Exactly how far does this extend? Exactly what does this include? From the context it obviously includes a new relationship to God. "All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ." As a part of the old creation, we were under the condemnation of the Holy God. The curse was upon us. But all of this changed in the new creation. We have a new relationship with God in which we are under His favor. If any man is in Christ, he is in the favor of God, is accepted before Him. Something new has happened here!

Our view of ourselves has changed. We are free from the terrible past. We begin to see ourselves in a new light. While there will be much about ourselves that we still will not like, we will have hope because we are a new creation. Once you become assured that God has made you a new creation, you are comforted by knowing that God has a way of sustaining His creation. What He creates, He sustains. He has sustained the whole creation across the centuries through all kinds of crises. Will He not sustain His new creation with the same faithfulness.

It changes our relationship to those about us. All of our values are made new. Human beings begin to look different when you become a new creation. While in the old you may have viewed them as competitor, or even enemies, you find yourself viewing them in love now. You see them as persons for whom Christ died. All things are become new.

If nothing has changed in your life, then you are not a new creation. There is no way that this inspired statement can be watered down to include what often goes under the name of Christianity in our day. The Christian is a new creation. Everything has become new!

### ***CONCLUSION:***

Do you want your life to begin again? Have you despaired of ever being able to do it yourself? This text offers some good news. There is a place that it can happen. It can happen. It can happen in Christ Jesus. You get to be in Christ Jesus when you repent of your sins, and you trust your life to Jesus Christ for salvation. Will you do this today?