

INTRODUCTION

Most people like new things – new clothes, new cellphones and new cars. It is thrilled to use something new. People even like to brag about the latest technology they have. But other people may not want to spend that much money to get new stuff. Instead, they shop at a store like Goodwill or go to a website such as Craigslist to look for used products. Between brand new and old things there is a third option called refurbished. Some customers change their mind after they open the things they buy, or there are some minor flaws in the products that need to be fixed. After those merchandises are returned to the manufacturers they will be restored to their proper functions. They look new after the process. I have a refurbished printer at home that I have been using for over 10 years. It is still working like normal. The Bible tells us that in Christ we are a new person. For example, Paul stated in [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) that: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! The question is, how “new” are we in Christ? When a person accepts Christ, it is not like he/she will change back to a baby. Sorry, your wrinkles will not disappear, and your gray hair will not become black once you become a Christian. In my case, there is no rescue for my bald-head. The newness we have in Christ is internal and spiritual. When we change from sinners to saints, God makes us into a new creation. In Romans 6, Paul shows us that our newness in Christ will also affect our relationship with sins. In Christ we can be different because we are now different.

EXPLANATION

1. 自我的認知 Self-recognition

First, Paul told us that we must come to a self-recognition that we have a new life in Christ. Paul used baptism to illustrate the changes we went through from non-believers to believers. He said in [verse 4](#): 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. Notice the word “with” in this verse. Baptism symbolizes that a person is buried “with” Christ and raised from the dead “with” Christ to a new life. The mode of baptism our church commonly uses is called immersion, meaning that a person is completely submerged into water. The actions of going into and coming out from the water represent that a person is buried with Christ and is risen with Christ. Again, I need to emphasize that the ceremony cannot save a person. Sometimes I ask people if they are Christians. A common answer I get is: “No, I have not been baptized.” According to the Bible, we are saved by God’s grace. We are not saved by baptism. Let us have a little review by reading [Ephesians 2:8](#) - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. Through baptism a person relives the process from unsaved to saved. A self-recognition that we are “with” Christ is an important doctrine. The word “with” is repeated several times in this Romans passage, either in the form of a prefix or a preposition. We get the term “sync” from this Greek word. It means together. If you have a car made in recent years you can sync your cellphone with the audio system in your vehicle. Not only that we are buried with Christ, Paul also said in verse 6 that we are crucified with Christ. Moreover, in verse 8 we died with Christ and we now live with Christ. Jesus’ death,

burial and resurrection happened more than 2,000 years ago. But when we became believers it was as if we traveled back to Jerusalem and went through the same process with Jesus. I know you get tired when you hear me talk about sports again. But do you why most men like to watch the games? It is because a part of them goes with the teams. When a team wins, they feel like hitting a jackpot. A sister once told me that when the professional football team in the city where she lives lost some men looked like their dads just passed away. Some of you ladies do not like sports, but you may watch romantic movies. Why do you cry like a baby when the main actress is dumped by her boy-friend? And you cry even harder when the man comes back, and the couple finally get married. You identify yourself with the characters in the plot. Paul told us that when we become believers we identify ourselves with Christ. That identification completely changes our relationship with sins. Paul said in **verses 6-7**: 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Paul stated that when our old self was crucified with Christ “the body of sin might be done away with.” What does that mean? The expression of “done away with” can be interpreted as “rendered powerless.” You may have visited a zoo before. You see tigers in cages and poisonous snakes in display boxes. Those wild animals cannot harm you because they are contained. The threat becomes very real if you are asked to go inside the restricted areas to feed them. Supposed all the teeth on those animals are pulled and the claws on the tigers are plucked. Those wild beasts cannot hurt you anymore. By rising from the dead, Jesus Christ destroyed the power of Satan on Christians. Before we became believers, we indulged in different kind of sins. Satan dragged us by the nose to make us stumble in sins over and again. But now the same temptations are rendered powerless on us. By the resurrected power of Christ in us, we can overcome temptations. Therefore, do not be fooled by Satan anymore! Next time when he tempts you, you can simply tap on the power of God and order Satan: “In the name of Christ, away from me!” Christians can no longer live in sins because Satan has lost his controlling power on them. We have to constantly remind ourselves that we now belong to Christ, who loves us to the degree of dying for our sins on the cross. Our self-recognition of who we are in Christ will help us make decisions that please God.

2. 自我的決定 Self-resolution

In this passage Paul told us that in Christ we can be different because we are now different. We come to a self-recognition that we have a new life in Christ. Paul went on to urge us to come to a self-resolution to live out our new life in Christ. Let us look at **verse 13**: Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. In this verse the word “offer” is repeated three times. The word means to present something or someone for use at one’s disposal. It is like the different tools in your garage or a waiter standing by a table. The tools or the attendant is waiting on your instructions. However, in Christ there is a major change in the picture. We are no longer the boss who grabs a hammer to strike a nail or orders a waiter to fetch us some water. Instead, we become the hammer or waiter to serve the Lord. In the past sin is our master, but now Jesus is our Lord. Years ago, in Hong Kong there was a cigarette commercial on TV. At that time the government has not banned such advertisement on TV. The slogan was “do what you wish.” Soon people complained about that message. The tobacco company soon changed the catchphrase to “do what you should.” That sounds more positive and responsible. True freedom is not to do whatever you want to. Instead,

it is the capability and will-power to do the right things when you ought to. In Christ, God gives us the power not to sin. That is something we did not have before we are saved. But God does not make us into robots. He gives us the freedom to do things that will please Him or grieve His heart. In Paul's descriptions even after we are saved we are either instruments of righteousness or instruments of wickedness. Paul went on to explain in [verse 19](#) that those two choices will lead to contrasting results: ... Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. Our decision should be to pursue holiness and righteousness, and to grow to be more like Christ. But how does this decision actually play out in our daily lives? Paul gave us some example in [Ephesians 4:28-29](#) - 28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. 29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Paul said that those who used to steal with their hands should now make their own living and help others. Then those who used to manipulate their lips in trash-talking should now speak words of encouragement. You may protest: "I have never stolen anything!" Have you taken some company stationary home for your own use? Have you stolen from the IRS when you twisted some numbers as you filed tax? Have you stolen credit from your colleagues and exaggerated your contribution in front of your boss? What about our lips? Have you ever stabbed people's back with your words? Have you ever made up stories with partial facts to ruin others' reputation? The Lord knows our evil motives! It is time to ask the Holy Spirit to perform a spiritual surgery on our tongues. Every sin begins in our mind. All the wicked schemes, pride, hatred and jealousy and every evil thought will grieve our Lord. We have to decide whether to continue our old style-life as if we did not know God, or to allow the Holy Spirit to rule over our lives. Living out our new life in Christ is not like a monk living in a monastery. God does not want to force us to do something we do not like. Quite the contrary! Living for Christ is a joyful experience because we are freed from the bondage of sin and do what pleases God.

CONCLUSION

In Christ we can be different because we are now different. We have to come to a self-realization that we have a new life in Christ. We also need to reach a self-resolution to live out our new life in Christ. We have changed our citizenship. All who are in Christ are no longer people of the kingdom of darkness. Rather, we now belong to the Kingdom of Light. We have pledged our allegiance to King Jesus. Not too long ago my wife took an oath to become a U.S. citizen. I was sitting at the back of the court room observing the ceremony. There were over 100 new citizens from various continents – Africa, middle and south America, Asia, you name it. I wondered if the judge who presided the event was a Christian. But what she said was very much consistent with the Biblical teaching. She welcomed the new citizens to this country. There are people who came from certain places in the world where they did not have much freedom. But as they began to enjoy freedom in U.S. there will be an obligation. They have to follow the laws of the land. Indeed, the laws impose certain restrictions in people's lives. But those limits are in place to protect the rights of everyone. In Christ, we can enjoy the freedom not to sin. We can fully experience this freedom when we obey God's Word.