

What Happens When We Become Christians

by T. Austin-Sparks

Becoming a Christian means experiencing a new life, a new consciousness of God, and a new understanding of the meaning of existence.

Duration: 54:51

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:3, John 10:10, John 14:6, Romans 6:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:1

Topics: "New Believer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the significance of the Christian life and its place in the eternal plans of God. The Christian life is characterized by a sense of hope and purpose, as believers have a deep-rooted consciousness that there is something wonderful ahead. Becoming a Christian brings about a new awareness of meaning and destiny, as well as a sense of vocation and calling. The speaker emphasizes that man's relationship with God is dislocated by nature, and that the Bible teaches that things were once right but have gone wrong.

Transcript

Our general subject is what it means to be a Christian. Last week we were occupied with the immense significance of the Christian life, its setting in the eternal councils of God. This evening we are going to consider what happens when we become Christians.

May I repeat what I said at the commencement last week, so that we shall be drawn together in cooperation in what is being said. I have three classes or categories of people in mind. Those, and in all probability there are some here, who have no definite experience of the Christian life.

They have not yet begun. They may be in all sorts of conditions, but they form one category. Then those who are but newly in the Christian life, without a great deal of experience or knowledge.

And then the old stagers who know all about it. Now if something or a part of what is said does not seem to be fitting your position, let's think that it may be for someone else. You enjoy your portion and try to enjoy someone else's as well.

I say that because it might just be that some of you would feel, now that's far too elementary, we left that long ago. And you might feel bored, but remember someone else might just leave that. And so on.

And you'll be very helpful to me if you will please take that attitude. What happens when we become Christians? And we shall proceed this evening along the same lines as we took last week. Not spending time on pointing out the misapprehensions, the misunderstandings and the misrepresentations of the Christian life.

Their causes, reasons. But rather shall we proceed to present the Christian life positively as to really what it is according to God's word. And leave you to make the comparisons and any necessary adjustments.

The only thing that I will say in that connection is this. That we are seeking to be preeminently practical. That is we are not occupied with the presentation of Christian doctrine in itself.

Christian doctrine will be here. But in the abstract we are not interested in presenting the doctrines of Christianity. Important as they are.

But what we are concerned with is to make everything practical and experimental. That which can be immediately put to the test so that at once it becomes clear as to what things are and to where they belong and what the issues are. There is, of course, a difference between the facts and the truths of the Christian life and the explanation of them.

That is, it is possible to have the experience and therefore all the facts to be present in the life without the person concerned being able to explain those facts. That is a part of our business. To explain the facts and to challenge as to the facts.

Now the explanation of the Christian life should be corroborated by the experience. That is, it ought to be possible for you to say, well, I could not have explained it like that but I know exactly in my experience what you mean. And that just does express my own life.

So that the explanation must be borne out by the experience. The experience must corroborate the explanation. Now then, come to this matter of what happens when we become Christians.

We shall spend some of our time in seeking to get back behind this matter of becoming a Christian. To get to certain other facts. Facts stated or revealed in the Bible and true to human experience.

This is where you will be able to give your own verdict upon the situation. In the first place, then getting back behind becoming a Christian. We come to man as we know him.

As we find him by nature. And what we find to be the situation with man by nature is that his relationship with God is completely dislocated. We Christians say dislocated because we believe what the Bible teaches that things were all right once and they have gone wrong.

If you for the time being prefer to wave the word dislocated it does not make any difference to the situation. Because things are not in order between man and God. Whether they never were or were and have got into that state need not worry us for the moment.

Presently we shall come on that perforce. But the fact is that the relationship between man and God is in a broken down condition. That is the basic fundamental fact.

The relationship is disjointed. It is in a state of strain. There is distance between man and God.

The relationship or the non-relationship is a very unhappy thing. The situation is by no means a happy one where man and God are concerned by nature. The relationship is altogether unproductive.

There is nothing coming from it. It is quite barren and desolate, unfruitful. But that is more or less negative.

It is worse than that in most cases. It is positively antagonistic in very many cases. Man is in a state of antagonism to God in his nature and often in his mind, in his attitude and in his reference to God.

There is a state of conflict. There is much suspicion in man's mind or heart as to God. A great deal of resentment exists in many human hearts.

And we can go further, for the Bible goes this far, and say that in some cases, perhaps not a few, there is even a hatred in the human heart for God. We meet that sometimes, this very positive state of antagonism and hatred. That is the first fact.

The relationship between man and God naturally is all chaotic, broken down, dislocated and marked by these characteristic features which I have mentioned. That is not all. We need to get inside of that and go further.

Man has a set of senses which belong to his spiritual being, which are not functioning. A set of senses which correspond to his physical senses. The physical senses, you well know, are seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling.

But man has another set of five senses which are not physical, but which belong to his inner man, the counterpart of those five physical senses. And in man by nature, these other senses are not functioning. The Bible speaks of all these senses in a spiritual way in relation to God.

The Bible speaks of a seeing of God, which is not physical at all, not with the natural eye. There is that little fragment known to most. The pure in heart shall see God.

That is certainly not a physical matter. Seeing. Again, hearing.

There is a spiritual hearing of God, which is not audible through the natural or physical ear. It's something in the heart. It's not a voice, but it corresponds to that in a spiritual way.

People are able to say, they've heard the Lord speak to them, but they've never heard anything with their natural ears. Hearing. Tasting.

Yes, the Bible says, And no one thinks that to be a physical matter. Smelling. That seems to be difficult, perhaps.

But you see, after all, we know what we mean without any physical factor coming in when we say we are sensing something. We go into a room, and it is not physical through the sense of smell by the organ of our noses, but there's something in the air. People have been talking, and we see looks on their faces, and when we go in, they suddenly become quiet and look at one another, and we sense something.

And you know it's possible to sense the presence of God. You see what I mean? A whole set of spiritual faculties which relate us to God when they're in proper order and function. And in the natural man, the unregenerate man, those senses are not functioning at all.

There's no seeing God in that way. There is no hearing God speak to them. There is no feeling God.

Feeling God. Tremendous thing to feel God, not with your hands, but in an inward way. There is no tasting that the Lord is good.

There is no sensing God or sensing God in the natural man. All these things are out of order. Yet the Bible speaks of them a very great deal.

If you like to go and look it up again, the Bible teaches that man's condition, man's condition confirms and corroborates that where God is concerned, man is blind. Man is deaf. Man is numb.

No feeling. Man is insensitive to God. I said we're being practical.

Is that true? That is the trouble of any one of you who may not have had a definite Christian experience. You, you don't see God in this way. You don't hear God.

You don't feel God. You don't sense God. God is unreal, remote, far off.

If he is at all, you don't know. But the Bible goes further still. It says that man by natural birth is lacking in that other thing which corresponds to his, may I use the phrase, his biological existence.

That is, life. We have a biological existence which we call life. And it is, of course, a very significant thing that the New Testament puts two different words over two different classes of people.

It uses that one word, bios, for natural life. But it never uses that word of the life of the Christian. It uses another word entirely which means something altogether different.

But the Bible says that man by nature lacks not only those functions of his spiritual senses, but he lacks that which corresponds to his natural existence, life. In a word, the Bible says that man is dead. Not only blind and deaf and insensitive to God, but he's dead.

He's dead. Death passed upon all men, says the word of God. Man is dead to God by nature.

He is dead to the true meaning of his own existence. Man by nature doesn't know why he was born, why he has a being. He has all sorts of accounts of his being in the world, explanations and excuses, shelling, responsibility, and so on.

All proving that he is entirely dead to the real meaning of his own existence. He makes the best of it. And sometimes that's a very good guess that a man will make of his life.

But after all, when set in relation to God and set in relation to eternity, he doesn't know why he's alive, why he has a being. He's dead to that. He is dead to eternal and heavenly things and values.

What a futile and hopeless thing it is to talk to man by nature about the things of heaven and the things of God. He looks at you, he gazes at you, he doesn't know what he's talking about. That belongs to a world with which he is not at all acquainted.

Far off, something different. And he is utterly bored. And he may be a very good man from certain standpoints.

A very educated man may be occupying a position of high esteem and respect amongst men. And he may be a very religious man. And there was such a man who came to Jesus.

An outstanding specimen of the best product of humanity outside of Christ. And over him was suspended one big question mark. He was full of the interrogation, how, how, how? Jesus said, well, no use talking to you about heavenly things at all.

You don't belong to that realm. You're dead to that. Well, that's on the negative side.

Now, is this true? I said at the beginning that you can put everything to the test. This is not just a statement of abstract Christian doctrine. This is a statement of fact which is verifiable.

Some of you may know it now in your own experience. Many of you did know it in time past, but thank God you know it no longer. Man is dead according to the Bible.

There is, where God is concerned, no response. It is useless to speak to a corpse. You'll get nothing back.

There is no correspondence. No interchange. No communion.

No fellowship. And that is exactly what the Bible and human experience say as to man's condition by nature. That surely brings us to a very practical point in approaching this question.

What happens when we become Christian? There are two fragments of New Testament Scripture which I think sum this up for us very concisely and very fully. The one is that statement so familiar and yet so little understood even by Christians. A statement made to the man to whom I referred just now who came with his big book, his big question, his multiple how.

Jesus simply looked at him and didn't try to answer his question at all. He knew how hopeless a thing it is to talk to a dead man. He looked at him and said, you must be born again.

Or literally, more correctly, you must be born from above. The other passage is also very well known in one of Paul's letters. Wherefore, if any man be in Christ there is a new creation.

Those two words sum up what happens. Born anew a new creation. And that takes us right over the ground which we have just covered in reverse.

When we become Christians in this sense, and I don't know of becoming a Christian in any other sense, that is, properly and rightly. I said I keep up negative ground and on positive. But it is not becoming a Christian just to accept the tenets of the Christian religion and give a mental assent to them.

Or joining some society which is called a Christian institution, though it might go by the name church. That is not becoming a Christian in the New Testament sense. The only true becoming a Christian is along these lines, born anew a new creation.

Which means you become a different species from what you were before and what all other people are who have not had that experience. And when we so become Christians what happens? Our state of death gives place to a state of life. This other life, this reserved life which no man by nature has ever yet had except being Jesus Christ.

This life we will not even give in the New Testament terminology. This life is given in the day of our faith exercise. Toward the Lord Jesus as Lord and Savior.

A new aliveness takes place. It is the first wonderful basic experience of the Christian. Christian at that time leaps into life and immediately begins to talk a new language about now knowing the meaning of life, what it is to live.

So on. But that is it. We have to begin right at the beginning.

What happens when we become Christians? Well, we are alive from the dead. We become alive but not just the resuscitation of something. It is the impartation of what was never there before.

A new life belonging to a new creation that is a new order which is a heavenly order because this is a being born from above. Jesus never said a truer thing than that you must be born. And if there is someone here tonight who has not had that experience you know you know because of the truth of what I have said about the natural condition you know quite well that well, if you are going to see God in this way and hear God in this way and feel and sense God in this way something has got to happen to you which is nothing less than that which corresponds to being born all over again in another realm.

You know it. You ought to confess that. Jesus is right at any rate on that, isn't he? It is true.

You must. It is not just the imperative of a command. It is not just a declaration that you have got to become a Christian to be accepted with God.

It is the statement of a fundamental and constitutional fact that you can never, never even sense God in a real way. Say, nothing of had living fellowship with God unless something happens that is absolutely constitutional. You have got to have a new life which is God's own life to make you understand what God is to know him.

This new life then immediately introduces a new consciousness about God. It is a new consciousness of God. Consciousness of God.

Immediately you are alive to God. You sense God. God becomes a reality.

A living reality. No longer remote. Far off.

Indefinite. Now very near. Very real.

Very wonderful. The greatest reality in your whole life. God in a new way.

A new consciousness of God. And then to the next aspect a new consciousness of the meaning of your own existence. Every Christian who is truly founded upon this basis of beginning of resurrection almost immediately leaps into this consciousness.

Now I've got the explanation of life. I've got the key to life. I know that I was born for something.

I never before knew that I was really born for something. I know now. There's a sense of meaning in my being here and of destiny wrapped up with this new experience.

It gives an explanation to my own life. Is that not true? True Christians, it is. Just like that.

Now we know. Now we know why we're here. A new consciousness.

And to carry that just one step further it's a new consciousness of purpose and vocation. Not only that there is a meaning in our being alive but there's a purpose that has come in with this new life. A sense of vocation.

We're called for something. And you don't have to get a lot of instruction about that. You don't even wait for it.

The true born-again child of God spontaneously instinctively begins to talk to other people about it. You can test your Christian life by that. You just begin.

You must tell them. You must talk about it. You must let them know.

That's vocation coming out. Feel you're called for something. There's business on hand.

And that can develop, as you know, to specific vocations. But it is the consciousness of purpose meaning and vocation which springs up with this new life. And then it's a new set of relationships of interest of desire.

We know that. This is what happens. Now, you're talking to anybody who hasn't had the experience about these things.

They have their relationships, their interests, their desires. And they just despise you for not doing what they do and going where they go and engaging in the things which are ever into them. And they do not understand you.

Do not understand. They think you've missed the way and you've lost everything that's worth having but you know quite well that it's just the other way. You don't despise them but you pity them.

Firefall. This is a transcendent superlative set of relationships. Christians know the meaning of that little phrase about those early servants of God who were arrested because they were doing this very thing fulfilling, expressing the sense of vocation and not keeping it in and keeping it themselves.

Arrested and brought before the authorities and threatened and what not and being let go they went to their own company. Instinctively. Instinctively.

To their own company. Well, we know what that means. There's a new company.

A new relationship. A new fellowship. A new set of desires and interests.

No one else can understand or appreciate but the Christian knows. That's what happens. That's what happens.

And further a new set of capacities. And this is a wonderful thing about the new creation life. This that is called the born and new life.

This true Christian life. It's a wonderful thing that you get a new set of mental capacities. Something different from and additional to and transcending natural mental capacities.

I mean a new understanding of things. And it's a wonderful thing this. One of the wonders of the Christian life.

You may find a person who has had no great advantages academically educationally or in any other realm. Very ordinary person. And yet coming into the real experience of the Christian life they become remarkably intelligent and knowledgeable and understanding and they've got an insight into things that a man of the highest education and the biggest brain is entirely incapable of grasping or understanding.

The thing that we Christians know to be so true that very often we think that a person a certain person because of such academic achievements and qualifications is bound to be able to understand and we're bound to have some good interchange with them and begin to speak about the things of the Lord and we meet a blank. We don't know what we're talking about. Here's this simple man or woman who knows knows it's a new mental faculty set of capacities and powers for understanding the things of the Spirit of God.

Knowing what no natural man can know. Not by the way of study but by the way of communion with God. Wonderful.

New capacities for understanding for knowing and these develop and grow as the Christian goes on. New powers of transaction inaction of doing. Christians the power of doing things other people cannot do.

Power of endurance power of overcoming and the power of working. Many of my friends here tonight will understand me when I say that sometimes and very often it seems that the Lord takes pains to undercut our natural ability for doing in order to lead us into a life where we can do without any do and that without any natural explanation at all. You look at much that has been done through true Christians in history, in this world you'll not be able to account for it at all on natural ground.

They were weak frail things things that have discount in this world but look what God has done through the weak things and the things that are not. Powers to achieve to accomplish to do which are altogether new a new consciousness a new state of relationships and interests a new state of capacities a new hope a new hope that is characteristic of the true Christian altogether new prospect is left into view. We shall see more of that later in our in the course of our evenings but here it must be stated that the Christian is, if a true Christian is not one characterized either by despair by hopelessness by a sense of final frustration and disappointment but a Christian is one deep down in whose very being there is rooted consciousness that there is something wonderful ahead something beyond.

The final argument for the afterward is not in any system of teaching about heaven or its alternative it is found in the heart found in the heart found in the life found in a mighty dynamic. What is it that has kept Christians going in the face of unspeakable difficulties and sufferings and opposition? What is it others capitulate give up, let go fall into despair? The Christian just goes on not because the Christian is better natural caliber than others with more tenacity and doggedness not at all, again it's so often the weak ones as counted by men but there's this going on what is it?

This is something something that has gripped within this is not the end and this is not all and there is death which lies beyond there is this hope which has come from the God of hope now when I have said all that what is the explanation of it all? A new life new consciousness new relationships and all things new and I do not exaggerate the Christian life What? Does it amount to? What is the inclusive secret of it?

You see it is not just that the Christian receives some abstract things you may call it life you may call it understanding you may call it hope you may call it power but these are not abstract things the true born a new Christian has received not abstractions but a person God gives his spirit to them that obey him the gift of the Holy Spirit is the inclusive explanation of it all and I say that in order to carry things into their right realm you see the Holy Spirit is God is God no less than God and the Holy Spirit has all the intelligence and knowledge of God all the power of God all the eternal prospect of God the elements of eternity timelessness all that is true of God is true of the Holy Spirit now if if God gives the Holy Spirit to become resident inside a person that person learns

like a babe from the beginning day by day year by year to walk in fellowship with the indwelling Holy Spirit that person is bound bound to grow in all these things that I have said bound to know divine life God's own life within a wonderful thing when you think about it not just an it but himself God in Christ by the Holy Spirit our very life I do like the way the Bible puts that about God that he or thou art the length of my days thou art the length of my days think about that that means that if God really is our portion resident within our duration our spell is not dictated by things by natural things he is the length of our days we shall die when he says the time has come not before things are in his hand and until that time the threats may be many the threats may be many but his life

persists and we rise again and rise again and rise again we thought the end had come we rise again and go on we say going on because he is our life it's a person the Holy Spirit is called the spirit of life to be resident within is a very wonderful thing and so if he has all divine intelligence and we are in his school living with him keeping fellowship with him day by day we'll grow in this intelligence which no natural man has growing in knowledge growing in understanding growing in ability to grasp things of God which no man apart from the spirit of God can understand I want to lay the emphasis upon that it is the Holy Spirit himself I know that Christians as such believe in the Holy Spirit the majority of evangelical Christians believe in the person of the Holy Spirit they put the

article there THE Holy Spirit whereas others speak of Holy Spirit but it's a part of our Christian faith to believe in the Holy Spirit as a person and to have some knowledge of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit his work his power but I find my dear friends I find amongst Christians a lamentable lack of understanding of what it means to have the Holy Spirit really dwelling within and that is disclosed and manifested by the very fact that they can act and speak so contrary to the Holy Spirit without being checked out by him be amazed how many Christians can speak in a way that the Holy Spirit certainly does not agree with and yet and yet they are not conscious at all of that fact that the Holy Spirit disagrees with them something wrong here about this practical expression of the indwelling

Holy Spirit so many Christians can believe lies about others and repeat them and never be checked out by the Holy Spirit within or never register the Holy Spirit's disagreement for his the Spirit of Truth there's something wrong here now the true Christian life and we've got to get to God about it if we're Christians means that wherever the Holy Spirit is in disagreement with anything that we say or do the way we say it or do it we should know it we should know it at once we should register not a voice but a sense the Holy Spirit in effect saying don't agree with you that's wrong that's not right that's not true that's not kind that's not good that's not racial there's a very great need for the reality of the indwelling Spirit to be expressed now I'm not saying that that failure to

recognize and sense and discern means that the Holy Spirit is not there but I do mean that we are not walking in the Spirit if it's like that something where we are concerned that is necessary in the way of

adjustment but coming to the positive that's a word of correction coming to the positive you see the true Christian life can be like this it can be and should be like this the Holy Spirit resident within and when you or I say or do anything with which He does not agree we know it we have a bad feeling right in the middle of us and we don't get rid of it until we go to the Lord and say evidently I was wrong in what I said Lord forgive me and put that out of the way and if it's done someone any harm well let's try and put that right that's a life in the Spirit it's very practical see

that's what happens when we become Christians it begins like that well the beginnings are very simple if you are just early in the Christian life you surely must know something like this in simple ways perhaps go to do what you used to do something inside you says oh no not now that belongs to the past well that's a simple beginning isn't it if you go on you burn your fingers and you know when you burn your fingers because you're alive if you were dead you would do these things and not feel them but because you're alive you sense well that's what happens when we become Christians in brief very simply but while I know that many of you know all that I do feel that with many coming to Christ in these days the beginnings of the Christian life it is important for them to know really what

they've come into really what has happened to them they may be able to say as I have said this evening yes well I couldn't have explained it I could not have put it into words or defined it but I know what you mean that's quite true it's quite true in my experience but you see it is something more than just feeling we've got to understand there's a lot in understanding if we're intelligent about these things may God make us intelligent Christians Christians who are going on in life in fellowship with his spirit within and growing all the time oh God forbid that if there are any young Christians here in five ten or twenty years time you should be just where you are now at the beginning that is not necessary because you know that being born is not the end of things that's only the beginning

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