

# New Life

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we're continuing in our series in Isaiah! You might remember that.

However, from last week's reading, and this is, there's a potential, and I think this potential comes with us when we think about salvation, the gift, this free gift. There is a potential for misunderstanding with the Israelites.

It's encouraging, isn't it, as we heard last week, to be told that God will never abandon you and that he will always restore his people. And yet, I think the question might come into our minds, why would he do that?

Why would he do that? We've just heard with the kids, the reason God saves anyone is always because of grace. The reason he gives new life is always because of grace.

It's always a free gift that we didn't deserve, and yet, it is so easy to slip into our thinking that perhaps there is something about us that has made us special.

[ 1 : 39 ] Perhaps there is something that we would, and deep down we'd actually quite like to earn it, but perhaps there's something about us that makes us special. So we can be tempted that, we can be, we can feel, can't we, so life-giving, so fulfilling, if you're praised or affirmed at work, at home, in response to something you've done.

That feels good. We enjoy earning praise. But as good as that is, and it should encourage us when that happens, that is not the life that Jesus gives. That is not the life that Jesus gives.

And it's why what God says to Israel, we need to hear just as much. We can be tempted to think that God chooses, that he says, that he gives new life because of something about us.

What I want us to know this morning is this, I want you to know that if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, that God's power is at work in you.

That his Holy Spirit power, the new spiritual life he gives, is swimming through your veins in abundance. You think of someone who needs a blood transfusion, they literally need an infusion to have life.

[ 2 : 54 ] Followers of Jesus have Holy Spirit power, new life infused, given into their very being. And it's not just a trickle, it's a surge of new life running through you.

But it is not earned. It's given. Given. Gifted not because of anything you did to deserve it, but entirely received because of grace.

That's what I want you to know today. From this reading, it is swimming through your veins. And it's swimming through your veins, not just to help you to live for Jesus, but it's actually empowering you to give you that new life, to live like him and with him.

That's what I want us to see this morning. It's the opportunity for us as we read God's word. So let's dive in. From verse 14 through to 44, verse 5.

This is God's word. This is what the Lord says. This is what the Lord says.

[ 4 : 09 ] He who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together. And they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick.

Forget the former things. Do not dwell on the past. See, I'm doing a new thing. Now it springs up. Do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. The wild animals honour me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen.

The people I formed for myself, that they may proclaim my praise. Yet you have not called on me, Jacob. You have not wearied yourselves for me, Israel.

You have not brought me sheep for burnt offerings, nor honoured me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with grain offerings, nor wearied you with demands for incense.

[ 5 : 11 ] You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins, and wearied me with your offences.

I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. Review the past for me.

Let us argue the matter together. State the case for your innocence. Your first father sinned. Those I sent to teach you rebelled against me, so I disgraced the dignities of your temple.

I consigned Jacob to destruction, and Israel to scorn. But now, listen. Jacob, my servant Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the Lord says.

He who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you out. Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant. Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land.

[ 6 : 11 ] And streams on the dry ground. I will pour out my spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow.

Like poplar trees by flowing streams. Some will say, I belong to the Lord. Others will call themselves by the name of Jacob. Still others will write on their hand, The Lord's.

And will take the name Israel. Let me pray. Almighty God, we thank you for your word, the Bible.

And we thank you that you speak to us.

And we pray that you would bless us and teach our hearts this morning. We ask for this in the name of Christ. Amen. God gives new life in impossible growing conditions.

That's what the thing that we see here. That God gives new life in impossible growing conditions.

What God promises to do for his people in the face of things, what we see here, is even more miraculous on the face of things than what he did in rescuing his people in Egypt.

[ 7 : 27 ] You'll see it's hinted to what the story of what God did to his people in Egypt. We saw it last week. But in verse 16, he made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, drew out the chariots and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished.

He rescued his people through the waters, through the Red Sea. But now, verse 19, he's doing a new thing.

Verse 19. See, I am doing a new thing. Now it springs up. Do you not perceive it? I'm making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. Verse 21.

I will provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. Sorry, second half of verse 19 we see it. We see in the beginning of the next chapter in 44 verse 3.

For I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground. The new thing we see.

Different to what God has done with Israel in the past.

[ 8 : 35 ] He is giving new life in impossible growing conditions. What God will do, this new thing, is more glorious. He's not going to save people to their own land, crossing through the wilderness.

No. The new work, what we see in chapter 44, is that he's giving life. The work will not be saving to a land, but that he will be saving people on the inside.

He will be changing their hearts. What it's pointing forward to is the work of the new covenant. It's pointing forward to when God promised to put his law in their minds and hearts of his people.

That's what we know that God is going to do. You look with me in the second half of verse 3. That's what we see. There's this promise, this future promise of what God is going to do.

I will pour out my spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants. They'll spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. Some will say, I belong to the Lord.

[ 9 : 38 ] Others will call themselves by the name of Jacob. They'll even write on their hands, the Lords, and will take the name Israel. This is what God is promising.

He's promising to give new spiritual life to hearts where it is a dry, dead, barren wasteland. This is what God is promising.

He's promising to give new spiritual life to hearts that are dry, dead, barren wastelands. You think of the driest place on earth.

Imagine the driest place on earth and a stream, water, just appearing. It would be impossible. The driest place on actual earth is unsurprisingly a desert.

It's the Atacama. I thought it might be the Sahara. But research tells me it's the Atacama Desert in Chile. It receives less than one millimetre of rain per year. And there's some areas of that desert that have not seen rain for over 500 years.

[10:42] It is a dead wasteland. Nothing grows. The animals that perhaps find themselves there, they scarp for food violently. No life, no people, no trees, just nothingness.

It is a dead wasteland. Can you imagine trying to survive in that kind of a place? Imagine what life would be like. It would be impossible and miraculous for anyone to survive in those conditions. And this is kind of shocking to us that what's being said here is that that is what a person's heart is like before they have a relationship with Jesus.

That is what a person's heart is like before they have a relationship with Jesus.

And yet, the promise is that this will be fulfilled in Jesus' ministry. It's the verses that we read early.

[11:50] It's the verses that we, to the kids, it's the verse that we started with. Can you imagine that?

If the water had just sprung up from underneath? If the Atacama desert just received one day of constant rain, it would be an oasis of life.

It would be an oasis. This is what God is promising. him he's promising to give new spiritual life in the impossible growing condition of a desert wilderness heart that's what God is promising the problem is this the problem is that we think or we want we don't want life to be given from outside of us we want to earn it we want to believe that life is found inside us that it's not out there coming in externally but it's in here it's a belief that there is something about you where new life can come from not life that new life given externally from outside is not is not necessary it's exactly where Israel are at when they look at themselves as individuals as a people what they believe is that their source of life comes from their biology from genetics that they already have the new life needed because their family of their family ancestry of their story that's the proof and that they can rely upon that they can put their confidence in their history that's why you know they look back to the story of Israel what he's done in there in their ancestors saving them and it's the rigid belief that this their history who they they can directly see how they um originate from these from they're descended from them the rigid belief that this is what qualifies them to be chosen by God that they are chosen because of something about them you see that it's what's hinted at the mindset of exiled Israel look just just remind yourself verse 16 this brief summary God's rescue from Egypt verse 16 this is what the Lord says he made a way through the sea verse 17 he drew out the chariots and horses they are moon reinforcements together and they lay there Egypt in the Red Sea snuffed out like a wick exiled Israel could trace in their family tree directly to those saved through the water which makes the next line really shocking if you were an Israelite and you read verse 19 you would be so shocked I mean this is the Lord he says verse sorry verse 18 forget the former things forget it do not dwell on the past see I'm doing a new thing now it springs up do you not perceive it you see God's response to them is this what I did for your ancestors bears no relevance on how I deal with you today your family history and story is not the source of life that you need do not put your confidence in who your great-grandad was you're not chosen because of them we mustn't believe that about ourselves either or put confidence in anything else now don't get me wrong um I don't think that anybody here is descended from the Israelites that crossed through the Red Sea however and it's increasingly unlikely with you know with in church attendance that we come from uh families where that I've always um gone to church but however um it's not beyond the question is it if you've come from a Christian family attending church learn how to give the right answers stand at the right time sing along um you could think just like Israel that it's your upbringing your family values and behavior is what qualifies you you could think well I'm from a Christian family and therefore by proxy I'm accepted because of what my great-grandad believed and how I was brought up that could be it could be part of the problem but it's increasingly unlikely

however that doesn't mean that we might not have the confidence in something that inside us inside us what is more prevalent um is that the source of new life still comes from something about you but it comes from within and it just needs to be found and set free to be true to yourself and it just needs to be released that new life the new life you need is really living without denying anything about the truest version of you you know um I like Disney but it's actually this is the gospel of Disney it's in every movie frozen you listen to the lyrics of this verse um it's funny how some distance makes everything seem small and the fears that once controlled me can't get to me at all and here we have it it's time to see what I can do to test the limits and break through no right no wrong no rules for me I'm free let it go the idea is that if Elsa to just if she just stops denying the true version that's what's calling her in she's denying the true version of who she is on the inside if she can live by her own rules and let the demands of her society go she won't be controlled by anyone or anything she'll be

free and she'll have this new life which was there all along she'll be fulfilled and able to express the truest version of who she is on the inside Disney's gospel is the new life we all need is inside us all along it's deep inside and it just needs to be released you just need to find it and let it go keeping that inside is wrong and leads to death let it go stop limiting yourself stop denying your true self find the new life inside and let it go let it out that you that your heart is full of hidden new life you just need to find it the bible paints a different picture of our hearts jeremiah 17 the heart is deceitful above all things who can understand it that is what these verses are getting at that the natural condition of a human heart is not teeming with it in life it's like the atacama it's like the sahara the natural condition of the human heart is dry where new life beginning is an impossibility where the jackals and wild animals scavenge that's our big problem we think that we're full of life that we've earned that we can do it just from what's within but our hearts are dry like a wilderness the only way to have true new life is not looking within but by receiving it as a gift from outside of us our evaluation of ourselves is way off rather than think we have life ready to be birthed from the inside out the cross reminds us that what is inside is not only not life giving but also brings death we know that because it kills jesus and the truth is the truth you know the real truth is that we know that's what's on the inside we're kidding ourselves because if we look into our own hearts we we might we probably will we should find some good moral behavior we are made in the image of god but we find we find desires that we know aren't right and what do we do with that what do we do with desires that we know we know are wrong what what if you tell someone to live out their own desires the truest version of themselves and they have an innate desire to hurt someone you want to suggest they just carry that out so that they can be the truest new life version of themselves by letting that restrictive shackle go james 1 then after desire has conceived it gives birth to sin and sin when it's fully grown gives birth to death all our hearts contain messy junk that doesn't lead to life the cross you see the cross gives us the reality check that it tells us that the only way you can receive new life is if someone pays for your old one and gives you new life that you could never not in a million years that you could never have or achieved or deserved by willpower or effort the life you long for the new life that you long for that you think inside is outside of you you long for it and it's inside christ and he gives it freely it is the perfect faultless exquisite beautiful life that christ gives we behave like desire driven wild animals he's treated like one that needs to be put down verse 25 i even i am he who blocks out your transgressions for my own sake and remembers your sins no more our dead hearts full of sin remember no more because jesus is blotted out he swept away when the world says look inside yourself to find new life grace says receive new life as a gift from jesus at the start of our time together i wanted you to know this that if you're a follower of jesus christ god's power is at work in you that his holy spirit the new spiritual life he gives is swimming through your veins in abundance you know the new life that he gives what that means is that we want to live that way as christians but what it means is that we don't have to rely on something on confidence or relying on ourselves not only to get into not only to have the new life but also to continue in it it means we don't rely on willpower to live this life but we rely on this living water the spirit of god that he gives into a dry wasteland that makes us like an oasis teeming with spiritual life jesus christ fulfills what isaiah speaks of john 4 we read it earlier jesus encountering a samaritan woman at a well asks her for a drink the woman's surprised wasn't the done thing at the time she questions him why he's done it during their conversation jesus says jesus says to if you knew the gift of cord and who it is that asks you for a drink you would have asked him and he would have given you living water she wants to know more about what this living water is she quizzes him jesus speaks again telling her about the water he offers everyone who drinks this this water the water from the well will be thirsty again but whoever drinks the water i give them will never thirst indeed the water i give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life the water jesus gives becomes a spring of water within them a spring of new life inside it is a picture of receiving the new spiritual life that jesus gives as a gift of grace a picture of what it means to receive the spirit of god to give you new creation life having the holy spirit coursing through you like spring in a desert like water arriving in the atacama not as payment for hard work not as payment for having the right family not as payment for having the

[ 24 : 41 ] looking inside yourself but given as a free gift it is given you see grace this free gift it is it is not just a fallback for moral failure it is that but it's not just a fallback for moral failure grace is the gift of new life grace is the continued work of his spirit in your life to help equipping you and helping you the only by his spirit can you actually live the new life that he's given instead of trying to prove yourself and earn it jesus says i've earned it and i've given you the power to live it today the river of

living water the holy spirit is alive and kicking inside with you if you've turned to him it is how new life begins but it's what empowers new life to continue it's what empowers making living like jesus possible no one can live like jesus by moral willpower by trying to look hard look by just trying to do heart do it better or harder or looking within you know do you ever feel like the things that jesus tells the commands you think that's impossible or it's just another thing that to feel guilty about where you haven't done it and and they think oh i should be more kind i should be better at this i should i should i should just a list of things that you should be you can't be that without but the spirit of god enables you to do live that new life so you live by the spirit of god not by trying harder you're empowered by him not only does he give you the new life but he alone provides the power to sustain you in it and grow you you will spring up like grass in a meadow you'll be like a poplar tree by flowing streams you will bear fruit because you're connected to the source of life so that when you feel angry rather than letting it get the better of you in this new life you're empowered with the opportunity to be calm and patient when you feel entitled rather than being selfish jesus spirit gives you the grace to make you humble and thankful for everything he's given you when you feel flat and discouraged rather than looking inside for the answer or looking for satisfaction in clothes or money or comfort you're empowered by his spirit not by trying harder but by the spirit of god to find complete satisfaction in jesus alone rather than thinking i should do that the spirit of god gives us an opportunity because his living water is coursing through your veins you are a tree planted by streams of living water whose leaves do not wither who always bears fruit in season you were dry and dead but now you are an oasis with life teeming so as we draw this in let me press this gospel home once dry but now an oasis of new life because the jesus living water has drenched and flooded your life the life you long for is now inside you it wasn't but now it is because this new life is inside christ and he gives it freely and he dwells within you let's pray almighty god we realize our complete inadequacy and even and being able to admit that is so freeing that we are inadequate to live the life of jesus in our own strength we can't we don't need to top up the commands and the way that you've given us as in just extra

things that we need to do but you empower us you give us this great opportunity to live the life that we long for because the life of christ is given to us this new life we know that our hearts were dry and we're not barren but you have drenched us it is coursing through our veins and so we praise you that it is not the grace that you give we praise you that it is a fallback for the moral failure that we have but it's not only that it's the new life given to us that helps us to live for you every day so change us mold us fashion us help us turn to you help us help us to admit and be open and honest about how we need to not try harder but depend on you we thank you and we praise you for all that you've done and continue to do in our lives in jesus name amen