The background of the entire cover is a close-up photograph of two vibrant blue butterflies with dark brown borders on their wings, resting on a large, textured green leaf. The butterflies are positioned one above the other, with their wings spread. The text is overlaid on this image.

*The
New
Birth*

"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN" (John 3:7)

**by
Ricky Sims**

THE NEW BIRTH

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The one who is born again loves what God loves and hates what God hates. The commands of God are no longer a point of grief .

THE NEW BIRTH

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Introduction

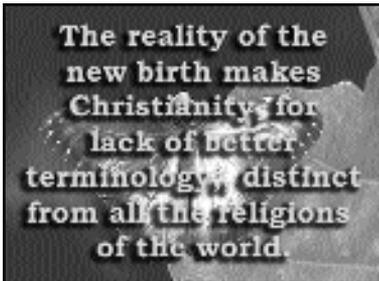
The reality of the new birth makes Christianity, for lack of better terminology, distinct from all the religions in the world. World religions may offer a strict moral code, a disciplined approach to daily life and a finely spun body of doctrine, but they can not give what humanity needs most of all—new life—transforming life.

When a person comes to believe in the Christ of the gospel and is baptized, a fundamental change is wrought within the heart and mind so that their ways come into harmony with the ways of God. This is what the scriptures call "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:5)." Under the Old Covenant, God exhorted His people, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts...For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD (Isa 55:7-8)." But, this condition is not found in those who have

truly been born again. They are a "new creature (2 Cor 5:17)," having been "born of water and of the Spirit (Jn 3:5)."

The one who is born again loves what God loves and hates what God hates. The commands of God are no longer a point of grief (1 Jn 5:3). Serving God becomes a source of joyful satisfaction. The one transformed by the new birth is able to understand the thoughts of God and to appreciate them (1 Cor 2:14-16). Living unto God is not only joyful, but reasonable.

As a result, God is not only served with hands and feet from without, but with a willing heart and a ready mind from within as well. This fulfills a prophetic word in the Psalms, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power (Ps 110:3)." Only the one that is born again can fulfill the "first and great commandment," which is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy HEART, and with all thy SOUL, and with all thy MIND (Mt 22:38, 37)." What a liberty is experienced by the believer in



this new life! We heartily agree with the Psalmist, "This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes (Ps 118:23)."

A Personal Word from the Author to the Reader

The words in this booklet are, by no means, an exhaustive look at what the bible declares about the new birth. But, they will provide a good working knowledge of this critical subject. It is my intention not only to give information about the new birth, but to bring edification to the reader as well. It was many years after my own conversion to Christ that I heard anything at all about the new birth. Had I known then what I know now, I could have avoided a great deal of confusion and instability in my early years of spiritual pilgrimage. It is my prayer that God will richly bless your comprehension of this truth to this end, that you may more ably fight a good fight and lay hold on eternal life.

--CHAPTER 1 --

You Must Be Born Again!

(The Necessity of the New Birth)

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God...Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (Jn 3:3, 7)."

The Beginning of Man

Humanity had a good beginning. When God made man, He "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Gen 2:7)." More than being a "living soul," humanity was endowed with the image of its Creator. God declared, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (Gen 1:26)."

Driven to obtain greater degrees of wisdom, Eve trusted the word of the serpent and "took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he

In this respect, man was distinct from all other creatures God made to dwell on the earth. Having been fashioned after God's "likeness," men had the peculiar capacity to walk in harmonious fellowship with God, both in heart and in mind. Before the fall of man, there was no hint of variance between the thoughts and

desires of God and those of Adam and Eve. Adam even entered into fellowship with God by contributing to the work of creation. The account is in Gen 2:19, "And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof."

The Tragic Fall

Driven to obtain greater degrees of wisdom, Eve trusted the word of the serpent and "took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate (Gen 3:6)." At this point, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin (Rom 5:12)." The word of the prophet Ezekiel came to pass, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die (18:4)." The corruption of sin entered into the souls of Adam and Eve producing a condition of death. The divine image had become marred, that had enabled humanity to live in perfect harmony with God.

For the first time, there was variance between God and mankind.

"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden (Gen 3:8)." Comfort gave way to fear and shame, driving Adam and Eve from the presence of God. The words of the Lord testify to this tragedy, "your iniquities have separated between you and your God (Isa 59:2)." The created had now become alienated from the Creator.

Incompatible by Nature

One of the deficiencies of modern theology is its oversimplification of the effects of sin upon the nature of man and how that bears upon his alienation from God. Not only had Adam sinned, they had become sinful while God remained impeccably holy & righteous. Man had become a "corrupt tree" bearing "corrupt" fruit. The trail of sin that would bear its fruit from the vine of sinful man would continually testify to the gathered words of the Psalms found in Romans 3:

"There is none righteous, no, not one: 11There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17And the way of peace have they not known: 18There is no fear of God before their eyes (v11-18)."

Having become sinners, men saw nothing of beauty in a holy and righteous God—nothing that would

attract them to Him. In fact, they "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator (Rom 1:25)" changing the "glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things (Rom 1:23)." The Lord's assessment gets to the root of humanity's estrangement from Him, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa 55:8-9)." Humanity must be born again!

The "ways" of sinful man did not compel him to seek out the one true God. Rather, they made gods that befitted their own corrupt desires, deriving pleasure from a lie, and attributing glory to the creation more than its Creator. What was said of Israel is true of sinful man as a whole, "my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me (Ps 81:11)." If men were ever going to be reconciled to God again, they would have to go through a change that would make their "ways" consistent with the "ways" of God. Humanity must be born again!

If that were not enough, God Himself would "have none" of sinful man. During the days of Noah, the corruption of sin and death so dominated sinful man that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Gen 6:5)." God's reaction testifies to His disdain for His fallen creatures, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them

(Gen 6:7)." It was during this grievous period that the Lord declared, "My spirit shall not always strive with man (Gen 6:3)." Either sinful man will be changed or God will destroy him away from His presence. God's word still goes out to the wicked man, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him (Isa 55:7)." God will not accept humanity in a sinful state. Humanity must be born again!

Sinful Man Can Not Understand

Jesus reasons upon the necessity of the new birth, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God (Jn 3:3)." The word used for "see" comes from the Greek word *eido* (g1492) which carries the idea of perception and understanding. In its immediate context, Jesus is responding to Nicodemus' words, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. (Jn 3:2)." It was as if Jesus were saying in reply, "You really do not perceive nor understand who I really am!"

The Kingdom of God can not be perceived nor understood by man in his natural cognitive capacities. It is written, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor 2:14)." This is not merely due to the restriction of His physical senses. It is sin's corruption in the mind of man that inhibits him from understanding the Kingdom of God. As God said, "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, AND MY THOUGHTS THAN YOUR

THOUGHTS (Isa 55:9)."

This is a contributing factor to man's alienation from God. Paul wrote to believers at Ephesus, exhorting them, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, IN THE VANITY OF THEIR MIND, Having the UNDERSTANDING DARKENED, being alienated from the life of God THROUGH THE IGNORANCE that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart (Eph 4:17-18)." Sinful man can not walk with God because he can not understand Him. His mind has become the grounds of every vain thought due to a darkened understanding. Much like the plague of darkness that kept the Egyptians from doing any productive work, the understanding of man has become plagued with gross darkness, keeping him from having productive thoughts about God. Humanity must be born again!

For this reason, wisdom that has its origin in man is utterly impotent in understanding God or His Kingdom. The charge goes out, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world (1 Cor 1:20)?" It is necessary to reaffirm this truth in light of the tendency of the professed church to employ such wisdom in matters of salvation & Kingdom labors.

The wisdom of man can not be blended with the truth of God, any more than darkness can be mixed with light. Those who couch earthly wisdom in their preaching and teaching, leaning the weight of their labors upon it are trusting in vanity "and vanity shall be his recompense (Job 15:31)." Such wisdom is as a bruised reed "on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand,

and pierce it (2 Kgs 18:21)." Those who trust in it will be hurt by it.

Hostile Toward God

Not only does the mind of sinful man bear vain thoughts, but those thoughts move him to hostility toward God and His wisdom. As it is written, "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom 8:7)." When the carnally minded person is confronted with the life of God, it opposes it. Consider this expression of the heathen found in Psalm 2: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The Kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us (v1-3)."

Forms of opposition take a variety of expressions. One of the milder expressions of opposition is to ignore the life of God. This is written of God's people among the Jews, concerning their treatment of His commandments, "they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts. They went backward and not forward (Jer 7:24 NIV)." Scoffing is a more progressive expression of enmity toward God. To scoff is to make fun of, or discredit. The treatment of the prophets by the Israelites is a clear example of this behavior. It is written, "they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy (2 Chron 36:16)."

The most aggressive expression of enmity toward God was in the death of Christ Jesus. Here is God in the flesh.

It is written of Jesus that He is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person (Heb 1:3)." Jesus testified of Himself, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him (Jn 8:28-29)." What pleased the Father incited sinful man to wrath. There was such a clash between the wisdom of God being expressed by Jesus and the wisdom of men that was extant among the religious leaders of the Jews that they "Killed the Prince of life (Ac 3:15)." If men are going to enter into the Kingdom of God, they are going to have to be born again!

The Testimony of the Law

One of the best testimonies to man's need to be born again is found in his reaction to the law of God delivered from Mt. Sinai. It was interposed by God as a covenant to the people of the Jews. We refer to it as the Old Covenant. On a number of occasions God would remind the Israelites of His covenant to them. Here is one, "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you (Deut 4:1)." Their lives depended upon perfect obedience to God's commands. God gave ten general commands (Ex 20:1-17). These commands were broken down into 630+ commands found in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The law made no provision for the transgression of any one of these commands of God.

Paul stated God's objective for the

giving of the law, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom 3:19-20)." God knew man, in his fallen state, was not going to be able to keep the law. The law was intended to teach man about his sinful condition—"by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Paul expressed his own discover of this knowledge. He testified, "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment,

wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died (Rom 7:7-9)." When Paul was confronted with the prohibition against coveting, it actually inflamed these evil desires within him to more aggressively oppose the law—"sin...wrought in me all manner of concupiscence...when the commandment came, sin revived." The very fact that opposition was aroused by a law that was "holy," "just" and "good" (Rom 7:11)—all attributes of God, Himself—was proof that man was NOT holy, just or good at all!! Thus, Paul soundly reasons, "we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin (Rom 7:14)." Men must be born again!

-- CHAPTER 2 -

The Prophets Speak

(Early Declarations about this Glorious New Life Experienced by All Believers in Christ)

"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (1 Pet 1:10-11)."

Under the Law

Jesus was said to be "made of a woman, made under the law (Gal 4:4)." This best expresses the period of history we may refer to as the Old Covenant era. This covenant was exclusively made between God and Israel. During this period, men were "under" the law's supervision. God made many promises of blessings to them. But His goodness to them was contingent upon their unwavering obedience to His commands. The Old Covenant did not give provisions to men to keep the law. Neither did it change the people who were subjected to it.

Ceremonial laws found in the book of Leviticus were put in place by God as a structured way for the people to worship Him.

Ceremonial laws found in the book of Leviticus were put in place by God as a structured way for the people to worship Him. Priests were ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices to God. God commanded the keeping of certain feasts. In all of these things, the intent was to draw the people into activities that gave them outlets of service to God—special times where the people could draw nearer to God.

God Laments

But, feasts that were intended to bring pleasure to God and His people actually became a source of grief to God. Hear His lamentation; "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. 22Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. 23Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols (Amos 5:21-23)." But why? It was not so much what they were doing externally as much as what was in their hearts as they served God. It is written, "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men (Isa 29:13):" There was no willingness or

anticipation in their service to God. One might say they were "going through the motions," doing their service without any true awareness of God—a mere routine, a perfunctory exercise. They were actually burdened in their service to God. They simply preferred to be somewhere else doing some other thing.

A Contemporary Application

Paul spoke of a time when professed believers would be noted as being "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof (2 Tim 3:4-5)." Their profession of faith would be nothing more than a pretentious show. As it is written, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate (Titus 1:16)." These people would not really be born again. There would be a strange absence of the hunger that David expressed toward God, testifying, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God (Ps 42:2)?" Neither would the course of their thinking be consistent with the mind of God, being caught up in earthly pleasures and the things of this life. These pretentious believers would not be bothered by taking Christ's name, but living in utter alienation from the life of God.

Their lives would reflect more of the ways of the world than that of God. They are the true "enemies of the cross of Christ: 19Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. (Phil 3:18-19)" They would not be living primarily for God, having taken up their own cross. Quite the contrary, they would be absorbed in their earthly lives and in things that

can be seen.

The church, at least in the western world, has become summarily plagued with this very Kind of people. Because such people do not truly have new life from God, their worship and service to God is very much like that of Israel under the Old Covenant—a feigned show of godliness. The thoughts and ways of God appear strange to them. Their service to God is perfunctory which is why it is done with a spirit of casualness, lacking the consciousness of God that would compel them to excellence.

Their talk tends to gravitate to some facet of their earthly lives and the realm of the seen, the result of minding "earthly things." Their religious activities bear the marks of the world. It is becoming more increasingly common for churches to gather together, not to hear the proclamation of the gospel for edification, but to have their earthly appetites appeased by some form of entertainment. Such people regularly confess to having no real hunger for God's word, or for the true proclamation of the gospel of Christ. Churches are having fewer meetings, and the time in which they do meet is becoming shorter and shorter.

Why do all of these conditions exist? When God saw such things in Israel's worship toward Him, His diagnosis was "this people...have removed their heart far from me (Isa 29:13)." It is my persuasion that such people have done the same thing. What fear they appear to have toward God is "taught by the precept of men"—a mere religious routine without heart. The church would do well to restore this truth about the necessity of the new birth—"ye MUST be born again!"

Hints of the Coming New Birth

The old Covenant never changed the people of Israel. It was a covenant summed up in externals—how you did things, when you did it, what time, etc. But it never addressed the condition of corruption that was extant within the heart and mind of man. This is why their service to God was so stagnant, a burden to both God and them. They really had neither the heart nor the mind to enter into such worship with a sincere anticipation and appreciation for God, Himself.

It was during this grievous period that God gave hints by the prophets of a time in which He would do a new thing, a work that would be distinctly different from what had been done up to that point in time. God was going to change the hearts and minds of men. It would mean a real change in the hearts and minds of men. Men would be "true worshippers" of God, rendering service to Him "in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:23-24)."

A People that Honor God

God announced through Isaiah, "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. 20The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. 21This people have I FORMED for myself; they shall show forth my praise (Isa 43:19-21)."

Like "rivers in a desert" the life of God would spring from the hearts and minds of men, where death and fruitlessness had been for so dominant and for such a lengthy period of time. Men would no longer be as the "beast of the

field" that has no capacity for appreciating and honoring God. Quite the contrary, this people "SHALL show forth" the praises of God.

He would "give waters" to the dry and barren souls of corrupted humanity and they would rejuvenate and "spring forth" into a new life, a life that would be lived in sincere devotion to God—"this people have I formed FOR MYSELF." The changes that would result in men would be openly obvious because there would be such a stark contrast from their former way of life—"shall ye not know it?" I sense that God is finding renewed strength to endure the present state of Israel as He makes this announcement through Isaiah.

A People with One Heart & One Way

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God announced, "I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: 38And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: 39And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever (Jer 32:37-39)."

Note the tone of confidence in these announcements—"I WILL cause them to dwell safely...they SHALL BE my people...I WILL BE their God...I WILL GIVE them one heart." This prophetic word is written of Jesus, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law (Isa 42:4)." This work of the new birth would NOT fail of its purpose. It would not produce some of its intended results. It was a sure work that would come to pass, and every ascribed attribute of this new creation that we find in the prophetic announcements would be resident in those whom God

had formed for Himself.

God was going to give men "one heart." The former life of the believer was a time when he was "serving divers lusts and pleasures (Titus 3:3)." The NIV translates this phrase "all kinds of passions." Corrupted humanity is carried away by many lusts that divide his affection among all Kinds of pursuits. The people God would "form" for Himself would be characterized by one dominating desire and quest, a "way" characterized by the "fear" of God. David articulated this desire, testifying, "ONE THING have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple (Ps 27:4)." The apostle Paul declared, "this ONE THING I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:13-14)."

This people would "fear" God "for ever." Such fear would not drive them from God, but to Him. He would "be their God," not by an unwanted intrusion into their affairs. They are the ones who would exclaim, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD OUR maker. For he is OUR GOD; and we are the people of HIS pasture, and the sheep of HIS hand (Ps 95:6-7)." Also, the fear which they would have toward God would not be sporadic like it was among the Israelites. It would be consistent and lasting—"for ever."

Notice one more thing in this text in Jeremiah—"I will give THEM one heart, and one way." The focus of the text is not an individual. It is a gathered "people"—a community. Although

the new birth is a reality on an individual level, it bears upon the community of those that share the common experience of being "begotten again unto a lively hope (1 Pet 1:3)."

Those that are born again share a single dominating desire—"one heart." They ALL thirst for the living God more than anything else. They ALL cherish His word and long to dwell in His house forever (Ps 27:4). The direction of ALL of their lives—"one way," is being shaped by this dominating desire. It may be said of them ALL that they confess to being "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and that they ALL "desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (Heb 11:13, 16)." This harmony among the community of those born again is called "the unity of the Spirit (Eph 4:3)," the result of them all being "born of water and of the Spirit (Jn 3:5)." As it is written, "For by ONE Spirit are we all baptized into ONE body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into ONE Spirit (1 Cor 12:13)."

Application

The professed church of our day is in an obvious state of retrogression. With all the divisions that exist among those who all profess faith in Christ, this attribute of God's people having "one heart, and one way" is finding its way into the shadows of obscurity. Nevertheless, the foundation of God's word stands sure; the true children of God are not fundamentally divided either in heart, or in the "way" of their life. Also, God does not have ANY children who prefer life on earth to life in heaven, living for self to living for God, living for the things that are seen versus living for the things that are not

seen. There is no such thing as a person who is born again whose primary interests and desires are embedded in earthly life.

A People that Esteem God's Statutes and Judgments

God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel about the coming new birth. It is written, "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: 20That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God (Ezek 11:19-20)," and again, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them (Ezek 36:26-27)."

I am struck by the emphasis of divine working in these two sections of scripture: "I will give...I will put...I will take...and will give...will I give...will I put...I will take away...I will give...I will put...and cause you..." The fruits of this new life, both in words and in deeds, are NOT the product of humanly devised plans of reformation. They are the result of the miraculous working of God's power in regenerating those who at one time were "dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1)."

The new birth is NOT a metaphoric way of speaking about the mere formation of good habits or a "way of life." Believers in Christ have really been born again. This is why it is written, "But as many as received him, to them GAVE HE POWER to become

the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (Jn 1:12-13)." If the new birth was a metaphor, power would not be needed to make us "the sons of God."

Notice the change in corrupted humanity, "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh" A heart of stone is an unfeeling heart. There is no sense of the deplorable nature of sin. It is written of such people, "Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every Kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more (Eph 4:19 NIV)." They are also described as "having their conscience seared with a hot iron (1 Tim 4:2)."

Also, such people do not have a sense of value and appreciation for what is righteous and holy. It is for this reason that corrupt humanity despises the keeping of God's commands and His judgments, which are "holy and just and good (Rom 7:12)." Shortly after God had thundered the Ten Commandments with an audible voice unto the whole house of Israel (Ex 2:1ff), they broke the first commandment and made other gods and worshipped them. Why? They had stony hearts. "Having lost all sensitivity," they gave themselves over to sinful indulgence.

Notice the glorious results of having the stony heart removed and replaced with a heart of flesh: "they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them...I will... cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them (Ezek 11:20; 36:27) What a marked difference from the former life. The

new nature would enable men to walk in harmony with God's law. The Spirit records this concerning believers, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4That the righteousness of the law MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US, WHO WALK not after the flesh, but AFTER THE SPIRIT (Rom 8:3-4)." Again, it is written, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law (Rom 3:31)." "Ye shall keep my judgments, and do them (Ezek 36:27)" This is not a commandment or an exhortation. It is a prophetic utterance of fruit that would surely follow the new birth. This is not a statement of how things ought to be, but how they really are. Those who are born again really do keep God's judgments and they do them.

Also, it is important to see that keeping God's judgments is not synonymous with doing them. Keeping has more to do with the heart and mind, whereas doing has more to do with the actions of the body. Keeping God's judgments has to do with giving

attention to them, to live in the awareness of them. But that awareness is spawned by a preferential affection for them. David was keeping God's judgments when He declared, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day (Ps 119:97)," and again, "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways (Ps 119:14-15)." John was keeping God's judgments when he said, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (1 Jn 5:3)."

In Summary

There are common threads that tie all of these prophetic words together. It is profitable to rehearse them. All of them testified concerning things that would certainly come to pass. All of them spoke of a fundamental change within the hearts and minds of men. That change would bring sincere harmony between man and God as well as man and man. Finally, God would be the One to do this marvelous work of transformation, not men. It is no wonder the Spirit referred to the salvation that in Christ as being "so great (Heb 2:3)."

- CHAPTER 3 -

The Believer In Christ Is a New Creation

(The Transforming Effects of the New Birth)

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor 5:17)."

The Source of New Life

In speaking about this new life, we must give due consideration to its source—Christ. The Spirit would have it so, in saying "If any man be in Christ." The "man" is not the focal point of this text. "Any man" may obtain this new life. It is the One to whom the man has been joined that has affected such a glorious transformation.

Not only is Christ the source of this life initially, but continued fellowship with Him is a critical part of sustaining the life.

Not only does Jesus give life, He IS "the life (Jn 14:6)." Jesus gave life to Lazarus after he had lain in the grave four days. But, the impartation of new life does not come from an audible word from Christ. Men obtain new life as a result of being joined to Christ. As it is written, "he who is JOINED TO THE LORD is one spirit with Him (1 Cor 6:17)," and again, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have PUT ON CHRIST (Gal

3:27)." That union is the source of this new life. It is for this reason that the Spirit affirms, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life (1 Jn 5:11)." It is not possible to be in Christ and not have this life!

Our new birth was much like the miracle of the dead man that was cast into the grave of the prophet Elisha. It is written, "when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet (2 Kgs 13:21)." The moment our spirits came in contact with the Spirit of Christ, we were made alive. Just as it is written, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us TOGETHER with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up TOGETHER, and made us sit TOGETHER in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:4-6)."

Not only is Christ the source of this life initially, but continued fellowship with Him is a critical part of sustaining the life. It is for this reason that Jesus exhorted His disciples, "ABIDE in me, and I in you. As the

branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it ABIDE in the vine; no more can ye, except ye ABIDE in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that ABIDETH in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing (Jn 15:4-5)." We will deal more with this truth in a succeeding chapter.

A Word about Baptism

It seems that some have become distracted from the primary objective of baptism. It is not merely following the "right procedure" for being saved or doing it for the right reasons. Although these are important considerations, they must not detract from the glorious work that God accomplishes in baptism. It is written, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST were baptized into his death? Therefore we are BURIED WITH HIM BY BAPTISM into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3-4)." The burden of baptism is being joined to Christ.

Also, dying with Christ, although a part of being baptized into Christ, is not the point of baptism. It is being "raised up" to "walk in newness of life." If men who have been "baptized" do not "walk in newness of life," the baptism is invalid. It simply is not baptism at all. Again, it is written, "He that hath the Son hath life (1 Jn 5:11)." The absence of "newness of life" is evidence that the person does not have the Son.

A Creation of A Different Order

"He is a new creature." The term "new" is not an expression of time, as of something that has recently come into being, like a pair of new shoes or a new car. It is an expression that signi-

fies something of a different order. The New Covenant is said to be "new" because it is distinctly different from the Old covenant. As it is written, "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a NEW covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt." The new man is not like the old one. Thus, the glorious announcement—"Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become NEW (2 Cor 5:17)."

A Change Within

When a person comes to Christ, they do begin to live quite differently from their former life. To hear some talk about this change, you might think being saved is like trying a new diet. People who are newly converted are said to have "gotten religion," implying that they are "trying" a new routine for living to "better themselves." But salvation is much more extensive and God-honoring than simply handing a person a set of new guidelines for living, while the individual themselves remains fundamentally the same.

Christianity is NOT a way of life, as it is often represented. It IS life itself. Believers do not live the way they do out of a sheer obligation to one's duty. Nor is their godly life the result of the implementation of certain habits and routines. True inward change and godliness can NOT be realized by an appeal to external duty.

These things may play a role in their lives, but they are not the compelling factor of the course of their life. It is a principle of life within that moves them to live the way they do, what the bible calls "the Spirit of life in

Christ Jesus (Rom 8:2)." How they live is consistent with who they are, being new creatures. Thus it is written, "he that DOETH righteousness IS righteous, even as he is righteous (1 Jn 3:7)."

Jesus once said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit (Mt 7:16-18)," and again, "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit (Mt 12:33)." Jesus further reasons, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things (Mt 12:34)?" The new creation answers the question of "how." In salvation, the "corrupt tree" is made "good."

Believers have, in reality, been personally transformed by their faith in Christ Jesus. The Spirit consistently keeps this truth of the believer's change before them. Some examples: "we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus 1:3-5)," and again, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) (Eph 2:4-5)," and again, "In whom also ye are circum-

cised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead (Col 2:11-12)."

Although we truly are the sons of God, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be (1 Jn 3:2)." Coming up from the baptismal waters did not appear to make the changes that are announced in 2 Cor 5:17. This is why such declarations of our change are constantly affirmed by the Spirit. These affirmations are made, not because we have not truly been changed, but because this new life springs from our faith in Christ. For this reason, Paul declared through the Spirit, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. FOR THEREIN IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED FROM FAITH TO FAITH: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom 1:16-17)." Affirmations like these build our faith, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom 10:17)," and our faith enables us to walk in newness of life and to obtain the resources that are necessary to sustain this new life.

Some Fundamental Changes: Spiritual Versus. Physical

So, what is meant by the announcement, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor 5:17)?" There are fundamental changes that take place within the believer that affect the focus and general direction in which they conduct their lives. One of the evidences of the new birth is found in the believer's

preoccupation with things that are spiritual versus things that are physical, what is unseen versus what is seen.

Man was made to live in a certain environment. Thus, God made man after he made the earth, furnishing it with things necessary for the life of the man. Then he told man, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Gen 1:28)."

Even the creatures that "moveth upon the earth" were made to live in certain environments. Fish were made to live in the sea. They can not survive on land. Neither can cattle survive in the water. They simply do not have the capacity to respond in that Kind of environment.

The scriptures speak of essentially two Kinds of men—"the FIRST man" and the "SECOND man." It is written, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor 15:45-49)."

The "first man" is said to be "of the earth, earthy." He was made to live & respond to the realm of the physical. That man is Adam, the progenitor of the whole human race. By nature, we

inherited from Adam the same propensity toward things that are physical. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh (Jn 3:6)." He simply was not made to inhabit nor respond to any other environment, especially a spiritual environment.

But the "second man is the Lord from heaven"—the lord Jesus Christ, and He is "spiritual" and "heavenly." He is of a different order of men than the "first man Adam," signified by the term "SECOND man." Like the "first man," this man too has children that are after His image. But, they differ in that the "second man" has the capacities to live and respond to a "spiritual" environment.

By our first birth we "have born the image of the earthy." The new birth enables us to "bear the image of the heavenly," giving us the ability to occupy a spiritual environment in heavenly places. Thus, it is written, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:4-6)."

The life of the new creation, what the scriptures also call the "new man (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10)," can not be sustained by anything that comes from the earth. It is what he apprehends "in heavenly places" that sustains him. This is why the Spirit exhorts believers, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and YOUR LIFE IS HID

WITH CHRIST IN GOD (Col 3:1-3)."

In the heavenly places is where the believer obtains "mercy and finds grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:16)." It is where he learns Christ and is "taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus (Eph 4:20)." This is where his communion with "the spirits of just men made perfect (Heb 12:23)" rally him to finish his race (Heb 12:1) as he reads of their account in the scriptures. In the heavenly places, he becomes "strong in the lord" and appropriates "the whole armor of God (Heb 6:10-11)." Here in these places is where he is ministered to be the angelic host (Heb 1:14) and where he is able to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18)." Our lives are truly "hid with Christ" in the heavenly places. No wonder the Spirit announces, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings IN HEAVENLY PLACES in Christ (Eph 1:3)."

Thus the believer occupies two realms. What is necessary for the body, he obtains from the earth. But, his primary occupation is with things that pertain to the new life he has received from Christ. That new life must be sustained just as the body. But the source of life comes from a different environment in the heavenly places. Thus, those who are born again live for the things that are not seen versus the things that are seen. Paul speaks on behalf of all of those who have new life when he confesses, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While WE LOOK NOT AT THE THINGS

WHICH ARE SEEN, BUT AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor 4:16-18)."

His Will versus. Self Will

Another evidence of the new birth is a person's preoccupation with the will of God over personal interests and ambitions. Being self-centered is a natural trait of the children of Adam. They deem it their right to live their lives the way they want to, following after "selfish ambitions (Gal 5:20)." You know that a great change has taken place within a person when he is no longer living for himself.

The one who is born again no longer lives for themselves. Life's objectives do not find their locus in personal interests. Personal satisfaction is found in being engrossed in the will of the Father and in finishing His work. Jesus articulated the desire of the new man when He testified, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work (Jn 4:34)." Again, He said, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me (Jn 5:30)."

Others besides Jesus have articulated this preference. Paul confessed, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal 2:20)." Again, these are not merely Paul's affections and ambitions being expressed. He is articulating the desires of the new man. These inclinations are common to the whole household of faith.

Notice some things about Paul's testimony. He says, "I am crucified with Christ." Not even Jesus lives for Himself. If we look to the cross, we hear the testimony of Jesus, "not my will, but thine, be done (Lk 22:42)." For Jesus to give us life and salvation, He had to subvert personal interests in deference to the will of the Father. He had to lose His life. Paul was not willing to receive the benefits of the cross and not be subject to his own sacrificial cross.

Paul further testifies, "nevertheless I live." Just as Jesus gave himself willingly to the sacrifice of the cross, Paul too willingly bore his own cross. Paul did not want to live for Himself. He wanted to live for Christ. This is not something he submitted himself to out of a sense of mere duty or moral obligation. The love of Christ had compelled his willing sacrifice, the chief of which was self interests. He testified, "the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again (2 Cor 5:14-15)." It is the same with the believer. They are not compelled to live for the will of the Father out of a sense of duty. It is their perception of Christ's love expressed in the cross of Calvary that inspires them to "not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again (2 Cor 5:14-15)."

Paul continues his confession, "but Christ liveth in me." Not living for self is allowing for Christ to live His life through us. The person living for Christ is wholly yielded to His directing influence within the heart. The desires of the new man are consistent with the supplication of this hymn

writer,

"Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the Potter, I am the clay: Mold me and make me after Thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still. Have Thine own way Lord! Have Thine own way! Hold o'er my being absolute sway! Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see Christ only, always, living in me." –Adelaide Pollard

To live is Christ to the one who is born again! Ambitions in life are only seen as relevant as they intersect with the will of the Father. The child of God will simply not place very much value on things that do not directly impact upon furthering the "good pleasure of His will (Eph 1:5)."

You will find, if you are born again, that you have the greatest measure of peace and satisfaction when you know you are in the heart of God's will, laboring in your Father's business by some respect. And you will be the most tormented and discontent when you feel distant from the Father and are distracted from such labors. Why? Because the new man was not made to derive satisfaction from the entertainment of personal interests, but from the fulfillment of the Father's interests! The new man within will seek after this course in life. Hear the desire of the new creature, expressed in the hymn, Draw Me Nearer written by Fanny Crosby, "Consecrate me now to Thy service Lord, by the power of grace divine; Let my soul look up with a STEADFAST hope and my will be lost in Thine."

Heaven versus. the World

Another evidence of new life is a discontent with life on earth and a fervent longing for heaven and life in "the

world to come (Heb 2:5)." Much as Jesus could not find a place to "lay His head (Mt 8:20)," while living in the world, the one who is begotten of the Father finds no such place of belonging on earth either. It has been well said that God did not save us for here—for life on earth, but for there. He has made the new man with higher and more glorious ambitions than earthly life could even begin to afford him!! Thus, he wanders on the earth as a sojourner, longing to finally be at rest in the bosom of the Father in "a better country, that is an heavenly (Heb 11:16)."

The preference of the new man is consistent with those who have also walked by faith in time past, of which it is written, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly (Heb 11:13-16)."

Again, these are natural inclinations within the one who is born again. They do not live with a preference for the life to come out of a sense of duty. They truly have a fervent longing for the heavenly country and a corresponding disdain for life on earth. Thus, we read, "if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a BETTER country..."

Notice, their disdain for life on

earth was the result of receiving and "seeing the promises...afar off." Only after they had "embraced them" did they "confess that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Thus, the life the believer lives unto God is not the result of a superficial adherence to what is believed to be our moral duty. He sees the greater value in receiving and embracing God's promises. Much like the man who found hidden treasure in a field, "which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field (Mt 13:44)," the believer too sees greater value in what God has promised and joyfully forfeits his life on earth in order to obtain the true riches which attend the promise of eternal life!

In the shining of Paul's hope of heaven, he testified, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom 8:18)." Again, he exclaimed, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor 4:16-17)," and again, "this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Ph 3:13-14)."

Such a hope is not peculiar to Paul although it is very personal to him. It is the hope of all believers. This is that "one hope (Eph 4:4)" that unites the affections of all of the children of God, whose faith has caught a glorious vision of the delights of heaven by which they have tasted of "the powers

of the world to come (Heb 6:5)."

Application

The only reason, brothers and sisters, why professing believers do not "sell out" for Jesus is because they do not see "the promises...afar off." Much of what comes in the name of Christ is nothing short of a near-sighted religious pursuit that emphasizes earthly life and portrays a longing for heaven as some irrelevant ambition that has no application to life on earth. They might say such things like, "What does that have to do with me here and now?", or "You can be so heavenly minded that you are of no earthly good." Those who say such things reveal their own preference in life. You will notice with consistency that people who speak this way are not noted for prodigious involvement in Kingdom labors. Why not? They do not labor with heaven in their eye! They do not see the full scope of what God is offering to men. Thus, to them, there

is no value in a fervent quest for heavenly things.

Rest assured, Jesus did not die to iron out all of our difficulties that attend earthly life. Nor did He give up His earthly life to enhance ours. Eternal life does NOT consist in the gift of a good job, a wife and children, a church to give you something to do on Sunday mornings and a moral code to make you a better citizen in the community! How truncated are the ambitions of the local church!! Do not be deceived, brethren! Any ministry coming in the name of Christ that draws people's attention to life on earth is not of God, but is of the devil. It is he that is "not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men (Mt 16:23)." And anyone who endorses a ministry that cultivates men to "mind earthly things" is not born of God, regardless of their profession of faith!

- Chapter 4 -

Created In Righteousness & True Holiness

(The New Man Is Free from the Corruption of Sin & Death)

"put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness... renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10)."

The Apostle Paul testified, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing (Rom 7:18)." The believer, though twice born, must still contend with the unprofitable workings of his own flesh. We may all give our seal of approval to the words of Christ, "The flesh profiteth nothing (Jn 6:63)." We look into the past when we were walking after the flesh and are utterly ashamed of the thoughts we had embraced and the ambitions that moved us along in life. Even now, the believer still must contend with vain thoughts and corrupt desires that proceed from the flesh. Yet, in the midst of such a contaminating experience, we may forget, if we are not careful, that there is now a part of us that is completely righteous and holy—untouched by the corrupt-

Even now, the believer still must contend with vain thoughts and corrupt desires that proceed from the flesh.

ing influence of the flesh. As it was said of Jesus, it may also be said of the new man, "the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me (Jn 14:30)." For, the new man is "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him...created in righteousness and true holiness."

Created From God

Notice first, the new man is said to be "after God...renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." As you must know, the term "after" does not refer to sequential order as much as it does to origin. The point is not that God came first, but that the new man was created from God. He is, in fact, the progeny of this new order of man. Other versions read: "created to be like God" NIV, "which in the likeness of God has been created" NASB. The NKJV is more precise in its translation; "was created according to God."

Just as Eve was formed from a rib taken from Adam's side, so the new man has been formed from the very substance of God, Himself. Thus, the expression, "children of God" is not merely a title or term of endearment. It is an affirmation of reality. As it is written, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children

of God! AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE (1 Jn 3:2 NIV)!" Again, hear this goodly affirmation, "Beloved, NOW we ARE children of God (1 Jn 3:2)."

The same substance that makes God who He is, both in character within and the overflowing actions from without, is also resident in the believer. It is written, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren (Heb 2:11)." Believers are said to be "partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4)," and "partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14)." They are "joined unto the Lord" and "one spirit" with Him (1 Cor 6:17). They are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones (Eph 5:30)."

We must avoid any views that would lead us to believe that these expressions are exaggerations of a lesser reality. This is not a metaphoric way of speaking of a mere adherence to a lifestyle that is harmonious with God's will. I contend that it would be impossible to live according to the will of the Father apart from being born of Him. The "lifestyle" of the believer, as it is in harmony with the person of God, is the fruit of partaking of a nature that is harmonious with the person of God! Hear again this glorious truth, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Let this truth encourage your hearts, brethren! The same nature that shapes the thoughts and desires of God is within you and it is shaping your thoughts and desires too!

Really Righteous and Wholly Holy

Taking the matter further, the Spirit affirms, "which after God, is created IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUE HOLINESS." What does it

mean to be created after the image of the Creator? To understand who we are, we must first comprehend who He is!

It is written of Him, "Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy (Ps 99:5)." The year of the death of king Uzziah, the conclusion of a lengthy reign over the province of Judah, Isaiah had a vision of God's holy habitation. The first thing to capture his vision was the Lord upon His throne in the midst of His temple sitting "high and lifted up (Isa 6:1)" The glory of His presence enveloped the temple with arresting dominance.

Isaiah's attention was turned to the expressions of seraphs that stood above the train of God's glory. He noticed that "each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly (Isa 6:2)." Isaiah was no doubt struck with the awesome presence of these high heavenly dignitaries. But, what they declared overshadowed their appearance. "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory (Isa 6:3)."

God is completely holy! He is holy, and He is holy, and He is holy! He is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (Jas 1:17)" and in Him is "no darkness AT ALL (1 Jn 1:5)." It is written, "The LORD is righteous in ALL his ways, and holy in ALL his works (Ps 145:17)." His nature and works are an expression of pure holiness, unmixed with anything that would take away from the testimony of these Seraphs. He is so holy that Isaiah's vision of Him led this pious prophet to exclaim,

"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts (Isa 6:5)." Even the holiest of prophets would feel nothing but uncleanness in the presence of such impeccable holiness!

He is holy in all of His doings! He was holy in the creation of the world! He was holy in the flood! He was holy when He made a covenant to bless all the families of the world through the Seed of Abraham and He was holy when He destroyed Sodom and the surrounding cities with fire from heaven! In His holiness, He delivered His people from the tyranny of enslavement to Egypt! And in holiness, He gave them the law and revealed Himself if flame and tempest from Sinai's mount! In holiness, He blessed His people by delivering them from their enemies and He was equally holy when He punished them with the rod of men! He was holy through out the ages of the prophets of old and He continues to be holy in this day of salvation! He was holy in time past! He continues to be holy in the present! And His holiness will continue into the ages to come! Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts! The whole earth is full of His glory! And this is the One from whom the new man has come, being "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (Jn 1:13)." And the new man bears His holy image!

One Implication: Freedom from Slavery to Sin

The new man does not sin because he is born of God. It is written, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (1 Jn 3:9)." There is no

harmony between God and the devil. God is impeccably holy, and there is NO unrighteousness in Him. The devil is only evil, and there are NO visages of holiness in Him. God can not work a work that has any degree of harmony with the work of the devil and visa versa. For this reason, there is no harmony between the one who is born of God and what comes from the devil "because he is born of God (1 Jn 3:9)." The one born of God is said to be "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph 2:10)."

Consider the strength of the Spirit's affirmations: "Whosoever is born of God DOTH NOT commit sin...and he CANNOT sin." The Spirit did NOT say, "Whatsoever is born of God does not habitually sin," but "Whatsoever is born of God doth not sin." If the Spirit did mean that the one born of God does not habitually sin or continue to sin (as some translations falsely affirm), how could He then affirm, "he can NOT sin?"

What is being affirmed by the Spirit? The new man does NOT have the capacity to sin or even be tempted by evil? As it is written, "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness (2 Cor 6:14)?" Absolutely none! The new man can NOT be "created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph 4:24)," and be "after God" and have the capacity to derive pleasure from what comes from the devil! In this sense, He is like God. It is written of Him, "God cannot be tempted with evil (Jas 1:13)." The one born of Him can not be tempted with evil either. He does not have the capacity to be seduced by the evil one.

It is for this reason that believers are liberated from enslavement to sin. Consider how many times the Spirit

makes an affirmation of our freedom from sin just in the sixth chapter of Romans: "How shall we, that ARE DEAD TO SIN, live any longer therein?...OUR OLD MAN IS CRUCIFIED with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin... Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as

those that ARE ALIVE FROM THE DEAD...But God be thanked, that ye WERE THE SERVANTS OF SIN, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you (Rom 6:2, 6, 12-13; 17-18)." The Spirit is not wishing for a condition among believers that does not really exist. He is affirming an unquestionable and unexaggerated reality that is true for all believers—no believer is under an uncontrollable compulsion to commit sin!

- CHAPTER 5 -

The New Man's Place in Our Warfare Within

(Although Born Again, the Believer Wrestles Against Sinful Desires)

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members...If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Rom 7:21-23; Eph 4:21-24)."

The New Birth Does not Eliminate Temptation

Although the new man can not be tempted by sin, this condition does not obviate the believer's grappling with sinful temptations.

Although the new man can not be tempted by sin, this condition does not obviate the believer's grappling with sinful temptations. The Spirit is very careful and precise in His affirmation, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin (1 Jn 3:9)." He did not say "The believer does not commit sin." If that was what He meant, why would He have previously made these affirmations, "If we say that we have no

sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 Jn 1:8)," and again, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 Jn 2:1)." If believers can not sin, why do we "have an advocate with the Father?"

What the Spirit has affirmed in Ch.1 appears to contradict what He said in Ch. 3, but that is only how it appears. That there is a contradiction, I do not deny. But it is NOT within the pages of holy writ, but within the believer, himself.

Man is Triune: Spirit, Soul and Body

Humanity is a complex creation. He is made up of three parts—spirit, soul and body (1 Thess 5:23). The spirit (or the "heart" as it is referred to in other texts of scripture) is the most inward and essential part of a person. By that I mean that the heart is the seat of desires from which are born thoughts and actions. It is written, "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he (Prov 23:7)." The heart has decisive control over the soul and the body.

As Jesus said, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (Mt 12:34)."

The body is the most external part of a person. Although man was made to inhabit a body, he can exist apart from a body. The Spirit spoke of being "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8)." Those who affirm that there is no existence after the death of the body are sadly mistaken. After the body of the rich man and Lazarus lay in the grave, the scriptures affirmed that their spirits were very much alive and actively responding to their surroundings: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom (Lk 16:22-23)." All of that to say, the body is not the essential person of man, but a vehicle through which the spirit of man finds expression in words and deeds.

The soul is more inward than the body. But it does not have as much control over the total person as does the heart. It is the seat of a wide range of emotions from anger to joyfulness, from zeal to despondency, peace to disquietedness. David grapples with his soul, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me (Ps 43:5)?" He also spoke of his soul being "joyful in the Lord (Ps 35:9)." The soul is also the place of reasoning, where thoughts and emotions are assimilated. David spoke of taking "counsel" in his "soul (Ps 13:2)." He also spoke of keeping the "testimonies" of the Lord with his "soul (Ps 119:129)" and praising the Lord with his soul (Ps 119:175).

The Nature of our Inward Conflict

Only the heart is transformed by the "washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5)" leaving the body and the soul unchanged. As was prophesied by Ezekiel, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26)." This "heart of flesh" is the new man which is "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him (Col 3:10)," and "created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph 4:24)." But, the body and soul are still susceptible to the corruption of sin and death. Paul referred to the body as "this body of death (Rom 7:24)." This conflict between the body and the spirit is what creates intense warfare within the believer.

I Do What I Hate

Notice the expression of conflict within Paul. He testified, "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I (Rom 7:14-15)." The "law" that is "spiritual" is written upon the heart of those who are born again. As it is written, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts (Heb 8:10)." Thus, the one born again not only agrees with the law but also has a deep longing to keep it as well. This is why Paul said, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man: (Rom 7:22)"

But Paul also grappled with carnal inclinations coming from his "members" that were in sharp conflict with "the law of God." He declared, "I see ANOTHER law in my members, WARRING AGAINST the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the

law of sin which is in my members (Rom 7:23)." Evil thoughts were coming into his mind without his consent. Thus, he said, "what I hate, that do I (v15)," and "I do that I would not (v20)." This is why these evil thoughts were said to be "warring AGAINST" the law of his mind. They were the intruders, seeking to disrupt a mind that was being controlled by a delight for God's law that was resident in Paul's new man! This experience is articulated in Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please."

Important Conclusions

Paul comes to some very important conclusions that concern this internal conflict that is not only resident in Paul, but is the common experience of all believers. One, the body is "sold under sin." It can not be loosed from the corruption of sin and the inclinations to sin that go along with that corruption. Neither can it be reformed or trained to want the right things. Once a person comes to this conclusion, they will no longer put their trust in the flesh. They have come to the same conclusion as Paul, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing (Rom 7:18)." Jesus said it this way, "the flesh profiteth nothing (Jn 6:63)." Not only in our bodies, but in the entire realm of nature, there is no good thing that will benefit our new life in Christ. Quite the contrary, everything tied to nature has a tendency to hinder our life in Christ.

Two, from reflecting on this internal conflict Paul concludes, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me (Rom 7:21)."

Being born again does NOT remove the inclination to sin that is resident in our "members." Many a believer has been puzzled and embarrassed by evil inclinations that followed them out of the baptismal waters. Some have even questioned whether they were saved or not because of the presence of shameful temptations that were warring in their minds. Paul wanted to do good, proving he had been born again, but he was not naïve to the "evil" that was "present" in him.

Also, this condition makes us vulnerable to the temptations of the devil if we are not careful to not give a place of expression to this sinful principle resident in our members. This is why we are exhorted, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof (Rom 13:14)." If we are not diligent to "keep under" our bodies (1 Cor 9:27), we will be "drawn away" from the One who saved us unto perdition (Jas 1:14; Heb 10:39)!

Three, Paul asks the question, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death (Rom 7:24)?" Paul knew that "every city or house divided against itself shall not stand (Mt 12:25)." This principle not only holds true in cities and among families, it also bears upon this division within the believer. This is my own perception of the reasoning that led Paul to this question, but I am sure it is consistent with Paul's mind. If what God has done within me in saving me is not in harmony with my "members," then the present conflict within is a temporary one. God would not leave us in such a wretched state!

More than that, He that saved me and made me to have holy inclinations will one day deliver me from this vile

body and will provide a body that is harmonious with my new man. Paul told the Corinthians, "For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. Now HE WHO PREPARED US FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge (2 Cor 5:4-5)." From this perspective, our present groaning can stir hope within our hearts. Jesus will one day deliver us from our wretched bodies "according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Phil 3:21)."

Probably the most important conclusion Paul came to was this one, "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me (Rom 7:17)." The very fact that Paul delighted in the "law of God (Rom 7:22)," and hated any thought that was in opposition to that law proved to him that he was not the one that was putting these thoughts in his mind. This conclusion enabled Paul to put down such thoughts rather than yielding his members to them. Believers who own sinful thoughts as coming from them will be carried away by them. If we yield to their influence, we will be subverted by them. They must be seen as intruders into the mind because that IS what they ARE! It is because of this warfare in the mind that we must "reckon" ourselves to be "dead indeed unto sin (Rom 6:11)."

I realize that this is easier said than done. Some days require extra efforts to "make not provision for the flesh" because of the aggressive assaults of our members. Having that said, no believer is a slave to these sinful thoughts. They can be cast down, but not in the energy of a discipline or

routine. Neither will we be able to do so just because we want to do so. We are going to have to obtain power outside of ourselves to overcome such powerful temptations.

Put On the New Man!

The ability to overcome sinful thoughts is resident in the new man. Thus, we are exhorted, "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness(Eph 4:22-24)."

The new man does not automatically have a prominent position in our thoughts and desires. As you have already seen, our thoughts can be derailed by the law of sin within our members. We must "put off...the old man" and "put on the new man." Someone once said, "Two hearts beat within my breast. One is cursed and one is blessed. The one I love—the other I hate. The one I feed will dominate." Speaking as a man, the new man will not force himself into a place of prominence within us. We must yield ourselves to his influence.

We are exhorted, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom 6:13)." Whichever man we "yield" to, whether old or new, will have the prominence in our thoughts and affections. Also, yielding to the one will stifle the influence of the other. Here is where we gain the victory over sinful thoughts and inclinations.

Putting on the new man will stifle

the influence of the old man. It is written, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal 5:16)." The text does not say you might not "fulfill the lust of the flesh." You "SHALL NOT fulfill the lust of the flesh." It is not possible to put on the new man and be enslaved to the passions of the old man! This does not mean putting on the new man alleviates times of temptation. It does mean that you have the ability to throw down "every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5)."

Putting On the New Man and Learning Christ

So, how does one "put on the new man?" More is involved than just wanting to put him on. Learning Christ is the only means we have of putting on the new man. Paul told the Ephesians, "ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus (Eph 4:20-21)." He went on to affirm in the following verses that this learning was the means by which the Ephesian believers were empowered to put off the old man and to put on the new man.

Learning Christ Is More than Learning about Christ

Learning Christ is more extensive than just learning about Him. It involves hearing Christ and being taught BY HIM, "as the truth is in Jesus." It is not merely the intelligent rehearsal of facts about Christ, but the fellowship that we have with Him as we muse on the "truth of Christ (2 Cor 11:10)." No wonder we are exhorted, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms

and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col 3:16)."

The two disciples of Jesus that were on the road to Emmaus are an example of this truth. They were talking together about the recent crucifixion and death of Christ. And the Spirit testified, "And it came to pass, that, WHILE they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them (Lk 24:15)." So it is with the believer. As we consider Christ's person and work through the truth revealed in the gospel, Jesus draws near to us, not as a spectator, but as a teacher.

When Jesus drew near to his disciples, He "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself (Lk 24:27)." Our studies in the Word are illuminating and productive in apprehending the truth because Jesus has drawn near to us!! After Jesus left them, his disciples declared, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures (Lk 24:32)?" Has not your heart burned with holy unction and hope as you mused on the scriptures concerning Jesus? Why? He was present...

The communion that we have with Christ in those times is a real source of sustenance to the new man. Jesus said, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me (Jn 6:54-57)." Learning Christ is the same as

eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood. By doing this, we abide in Him and He in us.

Learning Christ is also referred to as the "knowledge of Christ (Phil 3:8)." It is written, "his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet 1:3-4)." You might say it this way: Everything believers need to sustain the life of the new man is appropriated in their fellowship with Christ.

A Principle of Sustained Life In Christ

This principle of sustained life is what the scriptures call "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:2)." It is simply not possible to be in communion with Christ and not have everything that is needful for life and godliness. More than that, it is utterly impossible to be in fellowship with Christ and be subverted by "the corruption that is in the world through lusts." You can not be enticed by worldly lusts or be seduced by the devil while you are abiding in Christ! The One that is within you is "greater than he that is in the world (1 Jn 4:4)." Take heart, brethren, you really do have the advantage over the devil in times of temptation to the degree that you are abiding in Christ!!

The Issue of Falling Away—One of Neglect

Having said that, we must remember: only the new man can bear legitimate fruit to God—fruit that pleases Him. Jesus said, "He that abideth in

me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing (Jn 15:5)." If the new man is weak, because the believer neglects their communion with Christ, they will become fruitless and unprofitable to God. More than that, the desires of the new man will no longer have prominence within such a person. They begin to lose their interest in things that are not seen. Heaven recedes to the background and earthly life looms large, taking the seat of their desires. Heavenly things are easily purged from the mind and earthly things find a resting place there. Thus, the new man is put off by virtue of neglect, and there is only one alternative—putting on the old man again.

This condition is what makes believers vulnerable to the enticements of the devil. Every time a person falls away, it is owing to this very condition. Falling away is neither easy, nor innocent. It can NOT happen in a moment of time. It is ALWAYS preceded by a period of neglect toward the new man in despising Christ's command to abide in Him (Jn 15:4). Such neglect is NEVER by happenstance, but is ALWAYS a deliberate act on the part of the one falling away. Such people are NOT victims!

I am not saying that there should be no attempt to bring such people back to Christ. But, in coming back, such people must take full responsibility for their retrogression and repent of the works that led to their fall. This is what Jesus meant when He exhorted the church at Ephesus which had lost their first love, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent (Rev 2:5)."

Some Concluding Comments

As long as the believer is in the world, and more particularly, in this body of death, there will always be a certain measure of moral competition associated with doing the will of God. When you will to do good, evil will be present too to draw you away from Christ. The only way you will gain the advantage in this inner struggle is by putting on the new man. He is only put on to the degree that we are abiding in Christ. And abiding in Christ will only happen to the degree that we have faith in Him-making Him the primary focus of our affections and thoughts.

This is "the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God (1 Jn 5:4-5)?"

This is why Paul continually reaffirmed the gospel message to believers, which, he declared, "ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, IF YE KEEP IN MEMORY what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain (1 Cor 15:1-2)." From this perspective eternal security is a reality, "for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall (2 Pet 1:10)."

- CHAPTER 6 -

Begotten Unto a Lively Hope

(God has a Glory-filled Purpose Behind the New Birth)

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Pet 1:3-4)"

Begotten According to a Purpose

Such a glorious work begs the question, "What is the ultimate end of this new birth?" Well, before we answer that question, let us first recognize that the new birth is a work that corresponds with an extensive purpose. God did not save us because we needed to be saved. Pity did not

move Him to save men. His purpose compelled this work of salvation. It is "the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph 3:11)."

Consider how often we are told in scriptures that we have been saved according to purpose.

Consider how often we are told in scriptures that we have been saved according to purpose. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE...we have obtained an inheritance, being pre-

destinated ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ...now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, ACCORDING TO THE ETERNAL PURPOSE which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord...Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but ACCORDING TO HIS OWN PURPOSE and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11-12; 3:10-11; 2 Tim 1:9)

Purposed from the Foundation of the World

Although the greater part of salvation is unfolding in these last days upon the earth, "the works" involved in our salvation "were finished from the foundation of the world (Heb 4:3)." This is God's manner. As it is written, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end FROM THE BEGINNING, and FROM ANCIENT TIMES the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my

pleasure (Isa 46:9-10)."

Consider some very specific things that have been revealed as purposed from the foundation of the world. The truths of the Kingdom contained in the parables Jesus taught were said to be "things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world (Mt 13:35)." Atonement for sins was purposed before ever a man had sinned on the earth. Jesus is the "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8)." The glory which the Father purposed to give to His Son Jesus was said to be "before the foundation of the world (Jn 17:24)." One of these days, King Jesus will declare to His saints, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Mt 25:34)."

The Apostle Paul declared, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved (Eph 1:4-6)." Jesus was said to be "foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 pet 1:20)." In salvation, believers have been brought into the midst of an extensive purpose that reaches back to eternity past and stretches forward into the ages to come!

Two Truncated Views of God's Purpose in Saving Us

With the infiltration of man-made agendas and false teachers into the church, there have arisen short-sided and outright false views about God's

intention behind His work in salvation. For example, some think God saved them to be a witness to the lost. I personally heard a prominent leader in the Christian community say, "The church is the only institution that is not for its members," alluding to the fact that the only reason God saved us was for the purpose of saving others. Make no mistake, saved people are "the light of the world (Mt 5:14)." If lost people are going to be saved, it is going to come from someone who is saved. But this is not why God saved us in the first place. What will such people do in the glory when there are no more lost souls to be saved?

Some, at least in western culture where there is much affluence, affirm that God saved us to enhance our earthly lives. Thus, being saved, we are now better citizens within the community, better husbands and wives, better children, better workers in the job place, etc. Again, I do not deny that we are better in all of these areas since coming to Christ. But to say that this was God's objective in saving us—to draw our attention to life on earth, I firmly deny. If that were the case, it would certainly conflict with this exhortation, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth (Col 3:2)." Lest we forget, some families have been divided as a result of one of its members coming to Christ. Some have lost their jobs as a result of standing up for Christ. And others have had their name defamed in the community for walking by faith, not by sight. Did God succeed in saving such people, but failed to fulfill the objective behind their salvation?

Others have the same view as mentioned above, but a slightly different emphasis. They affirm that God saved us to give us earthly wealth and

health. For them, this is the primary token of our prosperity in salvation. Those who have accrued great wealth and consistent health are seen as giants in the faith. Once again, I do not deny that God could and has, in the past, blessed His people with wealth and health. But this is NOT why God saved us, neither is it a primary token of strong faith. Again, if this was God's real aim in saving us, then He has succeeding in saving men, but failed in fulfilling His objective when health gives way to death and the believer's possessions are given to another.

Objectives that Accentuate Life on Earth

All of these views of God's purpose accentuate "the here and now"—life on earth. They only sound reasonable as long as a person continues to exist on earth. Bring them into the shadow of death, to the Day of Judgment, after the heavens and earth have passed away with a great noise, even into the ages to come where men "neither marry, nor are given in marriage (Mt 22:30)," and such views fall to the ground. They no longer make any real sense. If God has purposed a salvation that gives the believer ETERNAL life, how can His primary objectives for that life be met in the temporal parameters of earthly life? How can God have an "eternal purpose (Eph 3:11)" whose primary objectives yield temporal results? Such views of God's purpose are utterly preposterous, and betray a gross ignorance of this "so great salvation (Heb 2:3)!"

Saved by Hope

Hope is an integral part of the new nature we have in Christ Jesus. God has "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Pet 1:3)." Hope is faith in a forward posture.

Hope generates an anticipation of things to come. It does not glory in the present time. A person who has a "lively hope" does not live primarily for the "here and now." The Spirit reasons with us, "hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? (Rom 8:24)."

Hope plays a critical role in enabling us to overcome the world. The Spirit affirms that believers are "saved by hope (Rom 8:24)." Hope genders a joyful expectation of what is perceived to be good things in the future. It convinces us of the surpassing value of heavenly things to earthly things, enabling us to hate our lives in this world that we might keep them unto eternal life (Jn 12:25).

Hope gives us the advantage against the temptations of the devil. All the devil can offer you is what you find in this world. He is called the "god of this world," and He "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (2 Cor 4:4)." How does He blind men's minds to the glory of the gospel? He distracts them by drawing their attention to life on earth. The believer is not diverted by such temptations because he is living with a lively expectation of a future that lay beyond the borders of life on earth.

Not only is the believer convinced of the surpassing value of that future, he sees the trials he faces on earth as being worth going through to get to that glorious future. Jesus spoke a parable, saying, "the Kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and FOR JOY THEREOF goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field (Mt 13:44)." It was

the joy that was set before Jesus that enabled Him to endure the cross, even despise the shame of it (Heb 12:2). Paul testified of the joy that kept him patient in hope, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom 8:18)."

Divine Design Behind the New Birth

Paul was a perfect example of what it means to be "saved by hope." He articulated this hope to the Philippians, testifying, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:12)." Again, God did not save us simply because we had a need for salvation. Salvation was a vehicle which God used to call us into His eternal purpose, a purpose that will continue to unfold in the ages that will follow the passing of this world and the Day of Judgment. God has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his Kgsndness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6-7)." Consider some of the good things that are ahead for the believer.

Everlasting Life

One of the great tragedies of life on earth is that it does eventually come to an end. Earthly relationships are severed by the experience of death. Men labor to gain possessions only to give them to another person. Skills distinct for life on earth are of no use after men pass into the shadows of death. Solomon once said, "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of

all his labor which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever (Eccl 1:2-4)." It does seem pointless and vain to labor for a life that comes to an end.

The life we have in Christ does NOT come to an end. It is written, "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life (1 Jn 2:25)." Jesus once said, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the Kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting (Lk 18:29-30)." I like the term "life everlasting"—a life that will always last. Jesus also testified, "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more (Lk 20:35-36)."

Relationships that are built among brethren in Christ will continue into the life to come as well as our personal identity with Christ and the Father. This is why it is so absurd to exalt earthly relationships to heavenly ones. There is such a thing as a "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother (Prov 18:24)."

The knowledge and wisdom we have obtained by walking with Christ here will assist us in the world to come. The treasures which we have laid up in heaven will be ours in the world to come. This gives purpose and meaning to our lives on earth. It is a time of preparation for life in the world to come. We must live here for the life that we will have there. As Paul testified, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I

do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:13-14)."

An Inheritance

Each believer has a very distinct inheritance allotted to them of the Father that they will receive in the world to come. It is written, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:16-17)." Saints have been begotten "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Pet 1:4)."

When Christ met Saul on the road to Damascus, He commissioned Him to the Apostleship, saying, "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Ac 26:17-18)." We do not know all of the details concerning our inheritance. But here is how I reason: If what Christ has given to me already is so precious, abundant and personally satisfying, the inheritance that I will receive will at least be this and much more.

A World Full of Righteousness and Peace

World peace is nothing but a myth for the present earth. Earthly men are "born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:7)." But it will be a reality in the world to come. It will be a "new earth, wherein dwelleth right-

eousness (2 Pet 3:13)." Much of the broken peace in this world is due to some act of injustice. There will be no injustice in the world to come; neither will there be any more wars. It is written, "he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Isa 2:4)."

This will make the world to come a place of peace. Believers are exhorted, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil (Ps 37:8)." Believers are not to cultivate a violent or vindictive spirit. Why not? "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Ps 37:10-11)." If the world to come is a place of peace and righteousness, it makes no sense for us to culture a malicious spirit here in this world. We are to live here on earth like we will live in the world to come. As much as is possible, we are to "live peaceably with all men (Rom 12:18)."

A Prominent Place In the Work to Come

One of the grand promises held out to believers is found in Revelation 3:12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." A pillar is not only designed to be a permanent fixture in the temple, it also has a foundational role in holding up

the temple structure. We too have been made to live forever with the Lord. It is written, "so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17)." More than that, we will have a prominent role in the work of the Kingdom in the world to come.

The very capacity that we will have in our new bodies testifies to the great plans the Father must have for us in the world to come. Consider what has been revealed to us concerning this new body. It is written, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned LIKE UNTO HIS GLORIOUS BODY according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. (Phil 3:20-21)." It is written of our present bodies, "It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:43-44)." The resurrection body will be like Christ's body, raised in power and glory by divine design. God has an extensive work for us in the world to come that will require great power and glory!

We know that our work will be a prominent one because Jesus declared, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne (Rev 3:21)," and again, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father (Rev 2:26-27)." In another place, this prophetic word is given, "And the Kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the Kingdom

under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him (Dan 7:27)."

Although we have the status of a pauper in this world, we will have a royal one in the world to come. As it is written, "And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath (Deut 28:13)." When this truth is readily seen, the believer is content to be last in this world. We are exhorted, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time (1 Pet 5:6)." Do not be disheartened, brethren, at your lowly position. God has you where you are for a reason. Your day of exaltation is on His calendar. You will not always live in the shadows of obscurity. Your righteousness shall "go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all Kings thy glory (Isa 62:1-2)."

Dwelling with Deity

There is no greater reward for the believer than to dwell forever with the Lord. God said to Abraham, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward (Gen 15:1)." Affinity with the Father and the Son is the highest honor and richest reward to those who overcome in this life and are counted worthy to obtain the world to come. Jesus prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world (Jn 17:24)." Now, we love Christ even though we have not seen Him. One day, we will be with Him where He is.

In fact, those who overcome in this life will "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth (Rev 14:4)," and He "shall lead them unto living fountains of waters (Rev 7:17)."

In another place of scripture it is written, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev 21:3-4)." The presence of God will bring us perfect satisfaction. It is written, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right

hand there are pleasures for evermore (Ps 16:11)." Think of what satisfaction fill our hearts now when the Father draws near to us. How much more so when we are in His unrestricted presence in the world to come! It is written, "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart (Ps 37:4)." His very presence will satisfy the deepest desires of our heart. I appreciate the words of the hymnist:

"What a day that will be, when my
Jesus I will see

Then I'll look upon His face, the One
who saved me by His grace

When He takes me by the hand, and
leads me to the Promised Land

What a day, glorious day that will be"

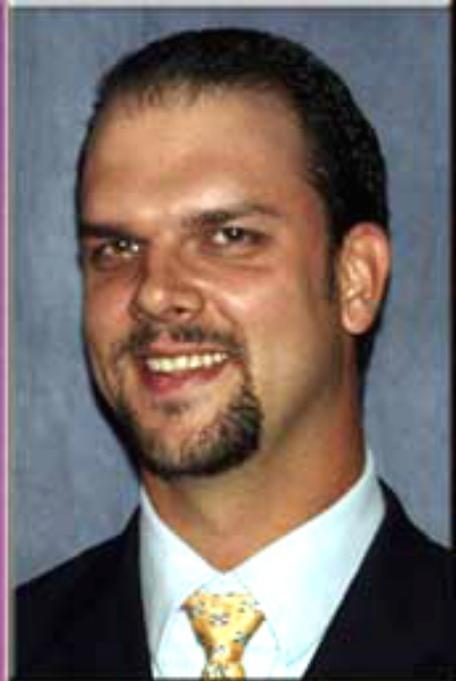
Conclusion

Much more, I suppose, could be said about the new birth. I feel as if I have only begun to touch the very hem of the garment when it comes to this vast subject. The salvation of the Lord is truly a "great salvation (Heb 2:3)." It was purchased in eternity past and will continue to unfold in the ages to come. Its purchase price brought Jesus into the depths of travail of soul and its reward gave Him the highest seat and the greatest name, both in heaven and on earth and under the earth. It has rescued fallen humanity from the dunghill of sin's corruption, and before the work is complete, it will give him a permanent place among the very princes of heaven.

Brethren, in light of these things, "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip (Heb 2:1)." Let us be zealous to remove every obstacle in life that makes it harder for us to "lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12)." Let us put off the old man and put on the new man, knowing the value that he has in enabling us to not only fight a good fight, but to finish our course (2 Tim 4:6-8).

In the midst of working out your own salvation, never forget: "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Ph 2:13)." Jesus once said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom (Lk 12:32)." Fight to obtain it and you shall have it. To this end, you have been twice born!

Brother Ricky resides in Joplin, Missouri, with his wife, Tasha, and their four children: Baylie, Annie, Hannah, and Rachel. He shares regularly in the ministry of The Word of Truth Fellowship, and is noted for his keen insight into the things of God.



Ricky Sims

"The one who is born again loves what God loves and hates what God hates. The commands of God are no longer a point of grief (1 Jn 5:3). Serving God becomes a source of joyful satisfaction. The one transformed by the new birth is able to understand the thoughts of God and to appreciate them (1 Cor 2:14-16). Living unto God is not only joyful, but reasonable."

**A BOOK THAT SETS THINGS
IN PERSPECTIVE**