

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (02).

June 17, 2007.

Review.

When God saves you, He changes you. Conversion to Christ has been and continues to be the greatest miracle God works in this world. It is infinitely greater than the miracle the Lord worked in raising Lazarus from the dead. Bear in mind that Lazarus was already buried four days and physical decay had taken hold of his body. (*Jn.11:39*). Last Lord's Day we began a new series that I have entitled "**The Christian Life**".

The primary point we looked at in our first study was the subject of "**change**". To repeat, when God saves you in Christ, He changes you. Biblical Christianity is about God saving the sinner in Christ and changing the sinner. The spiritual change God works is radical, revolutionary and permanent. The spiritual change God works is of such a nature, the Bible says you are literally a new creation in Christ. We saw that God began His saving work in you in eternity, He continues it in time and He will finish that saving work in you when Christ returns. In our study we looked in some detail at *Phil.1:6*. I emphasized that there is no good work of salvation that God begins in a sinner that He fails to complete.

Then we studied *2Cor.5:17*, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." The question I asked in making application is the question I want to ask again : are you a new creation in Christ? I am not asking you if you are a perfect person. I am not asking you if you are a happy person. I am not asking you if you are struggling with sin. I am not asking you if sin has been defeating you as you struggle against it. I am not asking you if you struggle with spiritual doubts. I am asking you if God changed you when He saved you in Christ.

I am asking if you are conscious of the fact that God brought about a basic, foundational, radical change or transformation in your heart, mind, will and desires, a transformation that has impacted your life in surprising ways. I am not even asking you if you have built on that change God has wrought in you. I am not asking if you have grown in that change God has wrought in you. I am simply asking : did God change you and are you conscious of this fact? **If God did change you, you will be conscious of this fact. If God did not change you, you will not be conscious of this fact.**

At this point in your Christian life you may be a battered or a crushed reed. The Lord's promise is, "A battered reed He will not break off." (*Matt.12:20*). You may be a smoldering wick, a wick with just a glimmer of life. The Lord's promise is, "a smoldering wick He will not put out." Why? Because God's promise is that the good work of salvation He began in you, He will complete it. My desire and prayers for you are in keeping with the Lord's promises. This is why my question to you about the conversion change God worked in you is so basic.

When God saves you, you cease to be old creation. God makes you into a new creation in Christ. The old has been brought to an end with definiteness and finality. The "new" has come and has come to stay permanently. This "new" that you have received from God will never grow old with the passing of time. This "new" cannot be brought to an end. This "new" cannot be replaced. This "new" cannot be overthrown. If you are truly a new creation in Christ, it is impossible for you to revert to being old creation. The "new" has come and has come to stay permanently.

There is something else you must understand. This "new" does not co-exist with the old. God did not make you a new creation in Christ and then put that new creation alongside the old creation to co-exist with the old creation. As a Christian you do not have a split personality. You are not some kind of spiritual Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. You are not a case of spiritual schizophrenia. You are a new creation living in a fallen unredeemed body, a body in which sins dwells and wages war against you. As a

Christian you are living with the enemy. The enemy is always with you, wherever you are and in whatever you are doing.

This war sin is waging against you is real, relentless, serious, difficult, and dangerous. Sin does not and will not give an inch in this war against you. There are no cease-fires or peace treaties in this war. As a Christian, sin is your enemy, a hostile, implacable enemy. Sin will use every available weapon in waging this war against you. You will quickly discover that sin's favorite weapons are lying to you and flattering you. This fact is made clear in *Gen.3* and repeated in *Psa.36*.

Now, I want you to note very carefully : in the midst of this ongoing and often raging war against sin, you must keep in mind that you are a new creation in Christ and God requires that you live "in newness of life." (*Rom.6:4*). There is no exemption here. The new creation in Christ must consciously seek to conduct his / her life day by day in keeping with the new creation qualities and standards. I have given you here a momentary peek into a very important subject in the Christian life. We will return to this subject in due course.

Let us return now to the Biblical truth of the permanence of your salvation in Christ. The Biblical truth of the permanence of your salvation is something that will surface again and again as we proceed with these studies. And I will take the time to point this out to you because of its importance and, hopefully, to lay a foundation to deal with its abuse. We have seen how the concept of being a new creation emphasizes the permanence of your salvation. *2Cor.5:17* says, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."

You are a new creation "in Christ". "**In Christ**" also emphasizes the permanence of your salvation. Who is Christ? He is the Son of God. He is the second member of the Triune Godhead. He is God incarnate, God revealed to us in the flesh. John wrote, "the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (*Jn.1:1, 14*). You are in Christ. The simple question is : who can take you out of Christ?

In *Col.1:27* Paul said the mystery of the gospel we preach is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” In *Gal.2:20* Paul wrote, “Christ lives in me.” What an amazing picture of gospel mystery this is : you are in Christ and Christ is in you! The picture of this gospel mystery is even more mind boggling in *Jn.17:21-23*. (**read**). You in Me. I in You. They in us. I in them and You in Me. The first question was : who can take you out of Christ? Now the question is : who can take Christ out of you? In *Rom.8:35* Paul asked, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ?” The conclusion to Paul’s answer is, “[nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (*vs.39*). There is no created angel, person, thing or power in heaven or on earth that has the ability to separate us or remove us from the hands of Sovereign Omnipotence.

Turn to *Jn.10:27-30*. (**read**). Now, let me read to you a literal translation : “My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give to them eternal life and they will not not perish into the ages and anyone will not snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” The *first* point to note here is the repetition of the emphatic “**I**” : “I know ... I give.”

Secondly, Jesus gives to His sheep “eternal life”. “**Eternal life**” is another way of describing the salvation you have in Christ. The primary emphasis in the word “**eternal**” is on the quality of the life received. “**Eternal life**” is defined by Jesus in *Jn.17:3*. Jesus said, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Eternal life or salvation is not a lifeless gift like a book. Your salvation consists on knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Your salvation consists of having an experiential relationship with the only true God and Jesus Christ, His Son. So often people treat salvation as if it is a lifeless gift. They want it. They take it. And they stick it in some corner of their lives. They have done their eternal good deed. And they move on to live their own lives in their own way. If this is the eternal life or salvation that you have, then you have missed Jesus’ point and you are not on board in Jesus’ ark of salvation.

The secondary emphasis in the word **“eternal”** is that you have received from Jesus a salvation life that does not end. It is eternal. *Thirdly*, Jesus said His sheep to whom He gave eternal life **“will not not perish into the ages”**. **“Into the ages”** is the same Greek word for **“eternal”** and it is plural. In other words, Jesus’ sheep will not perish eternally. What does it mean **“to perish”**? **“To perish”** is the very opposite of all that **“eternal life”** means. Now note the emphatic repetition of the negative **“not not”** which is usually translated **“never”**. **“Never perish eternally”** points to the impossibility of losing the eternal life you received in Christ. It points to the impossibility of steady spiritual decay setting in that would end in total loss. In other words, it is impossible for the person who has eternal life to somehow end up in hell.

Fourthly, Jesus said the Father **“has given”** the sheep to Him. The verb **“has given”** is perfect tense and emphasize the fact that this giving is once for all and permanent. Jesus speaks of the sheep as **“My sheep”** because they are His permanent possession given to Him by His Father. In *Jn.6:37* Jesus said, **“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me.”** There is not even the smallest inkling of doubt in Jesus’ confidence here. As Carson put it, *“Jesus’ confidence ... is frankly predestinarian.”*

Fifthly, the verb **“snatch”**, used twice, carries in it the idea of violence. It is the picture of a wolf snatching a sheep with violence and forcefully dragging it away. Jesus said this cannot be done to His sheep. In *vs.28* Jesus used the verb **“will snatch”**. This use of the verb conveys the idea of expectation. The emphasis is that no one should even have the expectation that they would be able to snatch Jesus’ sheep from His hands.

In *vs.29* Jesus used the words **“no one is able”**. It means no one has the power or ability to snatch away His sheep. Why? His sheep are in His hands and in His Father’s hands. Who has the strength or the subtlety that is sufficient enough to overpower or outwit the Sovereign Father and steal from Him? **“Who will separate us from the love of Christ?”**

Finally, Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.” The theology of this statement is astounding. The Jews regarded it as blasphemous and immediately picked up stones to stone Jesus. Time will not allow us to look in any detail into the meaning of Jesus’ statement. However, an important application to be drawn from this statement is that protecting the sheep is the joint task of the Father and the Son.

In this **Jn.10** passage the Christian is housed in Christ’s sheep-fold of eternal well-being and fenced in and protected by Sovereign Omnipotence. Your continuance in eternal life does not depend on your feeble efforts to protect yourself or your feeble efforts to hold on to Christ. Your continuance in eternal life is firmly rooted in Christ’s sovereign omnipotent protection of you and holding of you and the Father’s sovereign omnipotent protection of you and holding of you. In other words, the person who is in Christ is eternally safe.

You are in Christ. That is your address. How should you live? Christ is in you. That is Christ’s address. How should you live? You are in Christ’s hands. He is holding you. How should you live? As we noted in our Ephesian studies, people sin because they forget where they live and who lives with them. How strange that we can forget where we live and who lives with us! Being in Christ is not only your address, it is also your defining identity. It is with good providential reasons and purpose that the early believers were given the nickname “**Christian**”. The name “**Christian**” defines you and identifies you. How then should you live?

The Changes Detailed.

This review and additions bring us to the next point I want to deal with. I want to take the time to detail for you the many changes God worked in you when He made you a new creation in Christ. I begin by turning your attention to **Eph.2:1** where Paul said to the Ephesian Christians that prior to their conversion to Christ, “you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” Paul said the same to the Colossian believers. Prior to their conversion to Christ “you were dead in your transgressions.” (**Col.2:13**). In our last

study we noted **Rom.8:6**, “the mind set on the flesh is death.” The mind set on the flesh is death itself.

What is this death? This is spiritual death. Your state of spiritual death did not begin with your birth and first sin. Your state of spiritual death began the very moment you were conceived. (**Psa.51:5**). You were born spiritually dead and estranged from God. **Psa.58:3** says, “The wicked are estranged from the womb.” What does this death mean? It means you were dead to God and the things of God. But according to **Eph.2:2-3** you were very much alive to the workings and influences of the world, the flesh and the devil. It means you lacked the spiritual ability to respond to God and the things of God. This lack of spiritual ability is often expressed in the N.T. by the word “cannot”. The word “cannot” is literally “not able.” It describes the lack of ability or power to do something.

The spiritually dead sinner is like the idol(s) he worships. **Psa.115:5-6** says, “They have eyes, but they cannot see; They have ears, but they cannot hear.” Jesus said concerning sinners, “While seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” (**Matt.13:13**). Paul wrote in **2Cor.4:4**, “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” In **Jn.8:43** Jesus asked the Jews, “Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.” In **Eph.4:18** Paul described the Gentiles as “darkened in their understanding.”

In **1Cor.2:14** Paul said “a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” In **1Cor.1:18** Paul wrote, “the word (message) of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.” In **Jn.5:40** Jesus said, “you do not will to come to Me so that you may have life.” In **Jn.6:44** Jesus said, “No one is able to come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” In **vs.65** Jesus repeated, “no one is able to come to Me unless it has been granted him from

the Father.” If you think this picture of the sinner is bad, I can assure you that it only gets worse.

In this state of spiritual death the sinner’s mind, will, seeing, hearing and understanding are all non-functional. When it comes to the things of God the sinner is in a state of total inability. Talking to a sinner about the things of God and his soul’s salvation is like setting before a dead man his favorite meal and talking to him about it and asking him to get up and eat that meal.

In order for God to save you, He had to intervene and do something about this spiritual death. Turn again to *Eph.2:1-5*. (read). I want you to note the contrast Paul is setting before us. *Vs.1* says, “you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” You were dead to God but very much alive to the world, the flesh and the devil. You were living it up with the world, the flesh and the devil. (*vss.2-3*). You were also “children of wrath”, that is, you were on your way to hell but that did not matter to you and you did not care. You had no thoughts for God, His word, His salvation and coming judgment and eternal divine wrath.

But then we read in *vs.4*, “**But God.**” “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.”

The first and most obvious question is : why did He love you? And the answer is : because He loved you. He loved you because He loved you. This is the point Moses made to Israel in *Deut.7:7-8*. Moses said to Israel that the Lord set His love on them and chose them because He loved them. This was no ordinary love. In *Jer.31:3* the Lord declared, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.”

The reason for God loving you is God. The reason is not you because you were dead in trespasses and sins. You were dead to God but alive to the devil and your sins. But God

loved you and His love for you was no ordinary love. God loved you with a great and gracious love. God loved you with an everlasting love, from before the foundation of the world, and chose you in Christ. (cf. *Eph.1:4*).

You were dead. What did God do? He made you “alive together with Christ.” In *Col.2:13* Paul wrote, “When you were dead in your transgressions ... He made you alive together with Him.” In the midst of your spiritual deadness God intervened and made you alive with Christ, that is, in union with Christ. God broke into your state of spiritual death and brought an end to your spiritual death and gave spiritual life to you and put into you the spiritual ability to respond to God and the things of God. You didn’t do anything. God did this to you. You couldn’t do anything because you were dead. Did you cooperate with God even just a little bit? No! As we shall see, you were an enemy of God who always resisted God. Did you begin to seek God and did this prompt God to intervene? No! *Rom.3:11* says, “There is none who seeks for God.”

Hoehner tells us that Paul’s verb “made alive with” in *Eph.2:5* and *Col.2:13* is a constative aorist. It views the entire action of what God did without reference to its beginning, its progress, or its end.

The beginning is what Jesus described in *Jn.3:1-8*, what we have come to know as the new birth or as being born again. The new birth is a work of God in the sinner. God works the new birth in you without any help from you. The point in *Jn.3:8* is that the new birth is a sovereign and mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in you. No preacher can pray over you and / or lead you in some prayer and then declare you born again. No preacher has that prerogative or ability. You do not repent of your sins and believe in Jesus to be born again. You can’t because as a sinner you are spiritually dead.

Jesus made it very clear that without the new birth the sinner “cannot see the kingdom of God” (*vs.3*) and “cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (*vs.5*). Without the new birth the sinner lacks the ability to see, perceive or understand the kingdom of God. Without the new birth the sinner lacks the ability to enter the kingdom of God.

Repentance of your sins and faith in Christ bring you into the kingdom of God. But repentance and faith can be exercised only after you have been born again, only after God has made you alive with Christ.

With the new birth God changes the “cannot” into “can”. He changes your lack of spiritual ability into having spiritual ability. With the new birth the sinner’s mind comes alive to spiritual things. His spiritual blindness is replaced with spiritual sight. His spiritual deafness is replaced with spiritual hearing. His inability to understand the things of God is replaced with the ability to understand the things of God. His resisting God becomes submitting to God. His not seek God becomes seeking God.

Now turn to *Jn.5:24* and let us take note of the end of the process. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” The sinner is able to hear and understand Jesus’ word in the preaching of the gospel only because he is born again, only because God has made him alive with Christ.

The sinner is able to believe for two reasons. Firstly, because he is born again he now has the ability to believe. And secondly, the sinner is able to believe because God has granted to him the gift of faith. Saving faith is not self-generated. *Eph.2:8* says saving faith is a gift of God to you. This truth is confirmed in *Phil.1:29*. Paul wrote, “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” The verb “grant” means “to give graciously; to grant graciously as a gift”. Let me add here that saving repentance is also God’s gift to the sinner. In *Acts 5:31* Peter told the Jews that God grants repentance to them. In *Acts 11:18* we read, “God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.”

The sinner who hears and believes “has eternal life.” We have looked at the meaning of “eternal life” already. Note the verb “has”. It is present tense. The one who believes has eternal life, right now, in the present. You are saved right now. You are in Christ

right now. Christ is in you right now. And you can know for a fact right now that you are saved. You can know for a fact right now that God has changed you. You do not have to wait until you die to find out if you are saved. You can know and be sure right now that you are saved.

And then Jesus added that the one with eternal life “does not come into judgment.” What judgment? The judgment of the wicked in which the wicked will be condemned and cast into eternal punishment in the lake of fire. (*Matt.25:41, 46*). The one who has eternal life has received the forgiveness of his sins. In *Rom.8:1* Paul wrote, “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Are you in Christ Jesus right now? Then there is no condemnation for you now. No condemnation tomorrow. No condemnation next week. No condemnation next month. No condemnation next year. No condemnation twenty years from now. No condemnation when you die. “*But Pastor, what if?*” There are no “**what ifs**”, not now, not ever!

Finally, Jesus added that the one who has received eternal life “has passed out of death into life.” The verb “**pass**” means to pass from one place to another; to move from one living quarters to another. The verb is perfect tense and it means that once you make the change, the change is complete and cannot be reversed. It is a permanent change. Consider with me the following illustration.

Picture “**death**” and “**life**” as two cities separated by a large river infested with deadly piranhas. There are boats available to take you across the river from the city of death to the city of life. The boats are operated by remote control by the king who rules the city of life. But each boat can hold only one passenger. You board the boat and you are taken across. When you get to the city of life, you disembark. And as you are walking away you hear a loud noise. You look back to see the boat blown up and in flames. You look around and there are absolutely no boats available to take anyone back to the city of death. This is what it means to pass out of death into life.

Now, in closing, I want you to keep tabs on the clear emphasis. **Phil.1:6** tells us that God began this good work of salvation in you and God is perfecting this good work of salvation in you. **2Cor.5:17** shows us that God made you a new creation in Christ. In **Eph.2:1-5** and **Col.2:13** the primary focus is, once again, on God. God is the primary actor. God is the initiator. He was merciful. He loved you. He made you “alive together with Christ.” He removes your spiritual blindness, spiritual deafness and your spiritual inability to understand. He draws you to Christ and gives you the mind and will to respond positively.

Are you getting that sense of being overwhelmed by all that God did for you in saving you? Well, we are not done as yet. There’s more to come. Are you beginning to get an understanding of God’s gracious generosity towards you in saving you? Are you beginning to get a sense of the surpassing riches of God’s grace in kindness toward you in Christ? (**Eph.2:7**). The work of salvation God wrought in you is no ordinary work. It is astoundingly thorough, covering every detail, from the minutest to the most major.

Picture yourself as a blind, deaf, uneducated beggar living as a slave in the house of a cruel man. You have lived in that condition for years. Then one day, a kind man rescues you, gets you revolutionary medical attention that restores your sight and hearing. Then he educates you and puts you to live in a mansion with every luxury at your fingertips. How would you respond to this man? In saving you, God has done infinitely more than any human being can ever do for you. How should you respond to God?

How much gratitude should you show to God? How much thanksgiving should you give to God? How much should you worship God? How much glory and honor should you give to God? **Isaac Watts** wrote, “*Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.*”