

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (03).

July 01, 2007.

Review.

When God saves you, He changes you. Biblical Christianity is about God saving the sinner in Christ and changing the sinner. The change God works is foundational and radical. The spiritual change God works in the sinner is of such a nature, the Bible says you are literally a new creation in Christ. *2Cor.5:17* says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." We saw from *Phil.1:6* that this saving work God does in the sinner is begun in eternity, it continues in time and it is finished when Christ returns.

In our last study we saw that the sinner is dead in trespasses and sins. (*Eph.2:1*). In saving the sinner, God brings the sinner to life. (*Eph.2:5*). In our study we looked at the Biblical description of the sinner's spiritual death and the changes God works in saving the sinner. In the unfolding of our study we examined Jesus' teachings in *Jn.3:1-8* and *5:24*.

Side by side with this divine work of conversion change, we have been taking note of the eternal permanence of the salvation God has given to us. *2Cor.5:17* says we are a new creation in Christ. We saw this "newness" cannot be brought to an end, cannot be replaced and cannot be overthrown. It is impossible for the new creation in Christ to revert to being an old creation. The new has come to stay and to stay permanently. Next, we saw that the Christian is "in Christ". And the question was asked, "Who can take you out of Christ?" Then we saw that Christ is in the Christian. And the question was asked, "Who can take Christ out of the Christian?" The answer in *Rom.8:39* is, "[nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In **Jn.10:28** we saw that the Christian has eternal life and “will not not perish into the ages”, that is, the Christian will never perish for all eternity. In **Jn.5:24** Jesus said the Christian “has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” The Christian will not have to stand with the wicked in the judgment and face the condemnation the wicked will have to face. The Christian’s assurance is, “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (**Rom.8:1**). Lastly, we saw that the Christian has been permanently transferred from the city of death into the city of life. This transfer is one way. There is no return ticket or journey.

A Living Relationship.

To begin today, I want to return to a point I touched upon in our last study. When God saved you He brought you to life. You were dead in your trespasses and sins. All the characteristics of spiritual death were present in you. When God saved you, the life He gave to you is eternal life in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. **Jn.3:16** says that those who believe in Jesus have eternal life. **Jn.3:36** says, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life.” **Jn.5:24** says he who hears Christ’s word and believes has eternal life. **Acts 4:12** says salvation is to be found only in Jesus. **Acts 16:31** says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

In the Bible, eternal life and salvation are used synonymously. Those who are saved have eternal life. Those who have eternal life are saved. But we noted in our last study that eternal life is not a lifeless gift. Very sadly, for far too many people eternal life or salvation in Christ is a lifeless gift that they can receive with some wonderful guarantees. And having received it, they put it away very carefully and move on with their lives. Having eternal life is an end for them. **Bruce Milne** wrote, “*To receive eternal life is not the end of our journey; in the deepest sense it is only the beginning.*”

Please turn to **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 means more

than knowing the way to life. Eternal life is life itself. Those who receive eternal life were once dead in their trespasses and sins. But God made them alive in Christ. God gave to them eternal life. The sinner is physically alive but spiritually dead. The Christian is physically alive and spiritually alive. The sinner cannot respond to the things of God because he is dead. The Christian is able to respond to the things of God because he is alive.

Eternal life is that quality of life that establishes for us a living relationship with the only true God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Note carefully how God is described. He is “the only true God.” The word “**only**” means this God is the only entity in His class. He has no peers. “Only true” points to the fact that all other gods and goddesses are false. In *1Thess.1:9* the “true God” is set in contrast with idols. Paul said the Thessalonians turned from idols to serve the “living and true God”. The true God is the “living God”. He is not like a lifeless idol.

How do we identify this only true and living God? He is the One who sent Jesus Christ into this world. Who is Jesus? John tells us He is “the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father.” (*Jn.1:18*). And then John added, “He has explained Him.” Jesus has made God known to us. He has revealed God to us. He has explained God to us. **Morris** wrote, *“The only way to know God is through the revelation He has made, and He has revealed Himself in His Son. It is not possible to know God in any way that we choose. We must know Him in the One whom He has sent, namely Jesus Christ.”*

Eternal life is not a relationship that is a passing acquaintance. It is not a relationship that is a neighborly acquaintance. It is a living relationship that is a knowing relationship. Eternal life is a living relationship that transforms us and introduces us to a different quality of living. Because it is a living relationship, it is growing relationship that deepens and matures. It is a relationship that must be nurtured, fed, built up, and strengthened.

Take note of the verb “**know**”. *Firstly*, to know God is objective. It is a knowledge rooted in God’s revelation of Himself in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The knowledge of God’s revelation is recorded for us in His word. Our objective knowledge of God does not stop growing and increasing and must not stop growing and increasing. This reality is seen in *2Pet.3:18* where we are commanded to continually grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But *secondly*, and equally important, **to know God is to have an intimate, living, growing, transforming relationship with God**. To know God is not to have a passing acquaintance with God. To know God is not to have a neighborly acquaintance with God. The verb “**know**” cannot be explained outside the context of its Hebrew usage. The verb “**know**” described in the most intimate manner the relationship that existed between a husband and a wife.

Your knowledge of your spouse is firstly objective. Your objective knowledge of your spouse may begin as a passing acquaintance or as a neighborly acquaintance but it never stops growing and increasing. Your objective knowledge of your spouse is the foundation and materials for building a relationship of love, friendship, trust, fellowship, care and intimacy. Of necessity this intimate experiential knowledge of your spouse transforms you. It increasingly and positively transforms your mindset and attitudes towards your spouse. If this is not happening, then something is fundamentally wrong with the husband / wife relationship you established.

Your salvation relationship with Christ is not a passing acquaintance relationship. Your salvation relationship with Christ is not a neighborly acquaintance relationship. Your salvation relationship with Christ is pictured in terms of the husband / wife relationship. It is a living, growing, intimate and transforming relationship. It is rooted in your objective knowledge of Christ, a knowledge that is ever growing and increasing.

Your objective knowledge of Christ is the foundation and the materials for building a personal and intimate relationship of love, faith, trust, fellowship, friendship and

discipleship. Of necessity this growing intimate experiential knowledge of Christ will increasingly and positively transform your mindset and attitudes towards Christ. If this is not happening, then something is fundamentally wrong with the salvation relationship you established with Christ.

I return to where I started. Salvation in Christ is not a lifeless gift. Salvation in Christ is a living gift. Salvation in Christ is not the end of the journey. Salvation in Christ is the beginning of the journey. It is the beginning of a journey with Christ that is living, growing, intimate and transforming. And so, I must ask you : do you know Christ? Do you have a living, growing, intimate and transforming relationship with Christ? If you do not, you need, with the utmost urgency, to become exceedingly alarmed over the spiritual and eternal welfare of your soul.

The Changes Detailed (Continued).

We come now to work out some more of the changes God worked in you when He saved you. And I have seven sub-points that I want to set before you.

1). In *Lk.19:10* Jesus said, “the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” As a sinner you were like the one lost sheep Jesus described in *Lk.15:4*. The Lord Jesus, the Chief Shepherd and Guardian of our souls (*1Pet.2:25; 5:4*), went in search of you, found you and saved or rescued you.

2). *1Thess.1:9* says we are those who have “turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God.” We have been changed from being sinners to being saints. (*1Cor.1:2*). We have been changed from being ungodly to being godly. (*Rom.5:6; 1Tim.1:9; 2:2; 2Tim.3:12*). We were once the “sons of disobedience” (*Eph.5:6*). But now we are the “children of obedience”. (*1Pet.1:14*). Once, with hostility, we refused to subject ourselves to the word of God. (*Rom.8:7*). Now we obey God. (*Acts 5:29; 1Pet.1:2*).

3). In *Eph.5:8* Paul wrote, “you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” Here the focus is on what they actually were when they were not Christians. They were darkness itself. They were the very embodiment of moral and spiritual darkness. But when the Lord saved them they became “light in the Lord.” Note the qualifier in this statement. They are “light in the Lord.” In other words, apart from the Lord there is no light and they could not become light. In *Jn.8:12 & 9:5* Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world.”

1Pet.2:9 says God “has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” In saving you, God calls you out of darkness, that is, out of your state of sin and spiritual ignorance. “**Light**” represents the sphere of purity, holiness and true spiritual knowledge. In *Col.1:13* we are told that God rescued us from “the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.” The domain of darkness is Satan’s domain. The emphasis here is that the sphere of the Christian’s life has been radically changed. He no longer lives under Satan’s authority. He now lives under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Christians we are “sons of Light.” (*Jn.12:35*). Paul said, “you are all sons of light and sons of day.” (*1Thess.5:5*).

How is this truth of being changed into light applied to us? *Firstly*, darkness and light cannot co-exist. Light will dispel darkness. Notice, Paul did not say you are becoming light. He said you are light in the Lord. In other words, you have ceased to be darkness. As we have seen, you are not in a state of spiritual schizophrenia. The change is radical. Peter did not say you are called out of darkness into dusk. You were called out of darkness into His marvelous light. You were taken out from Satan’s domain of darkness and transferred into Christ’s kingdom.

Secondly, Jesus said in *Jn.8:12*, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life.” Jesus is the Light of the world. The Christian is light in the Lord. In *Eph.5:8* Paul’s command is, “walk as children of Light.” Conduct your lives as children of Light. In *Matt.5:14* Jesus said to His disciples, “You are the light of the world.” The follower of Jesus will not conduct his

life in this world according to the principles of darkness. He will conduct his life in this world according to the Light of life.

Jesus commanded us in *Matt.5:16*, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." In *1Pet.2:9* you are called upon to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Thirdly, turn to *1Jn.1:5-7* (**read**). Light dispels darkness. God is Light. John is saying to us that we cannot claim to have fellowship with God who is Light and at the same time have fellowship with darkness. We cannot claim to have fellowship with God who is Light and at the same time live according to the principles of darkness. We cannot claim to have fellowship with God who is Light and at the same time reject fellowship with fellow Christians who are in the Light.

Fourthly, *1Jn.2:9* says, "The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now." *Vs.11* adds, "the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes." John repeatedly uses the definite article with "**darkness**". It is always "the darkness". "**The darkness**" is not ignorance of the truth or even falling into sin. Your brother or sister in Christ is in the Light just as you claim to be in the Light. If you hate your brother or sister who is in the Light, John says you are "in the darkness" and you are "walking in the darkness". John is saying that you are lost in your sins and the scary part is, you do not know it.

4). In *Jn.8:44* Jesus said that as a sinner you were of "your father the devil." *Eph.2:3* says you were the "children of wrath", that is, you were on your way to "the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels." (*Matt.25:41*). We were the children of the devil bound for the devil's eternal abode. But when God saved us we became "the children of God". In *Rom.8:16-17* Paul wrote, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also,

heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ.” As the children of God we have the wonderful privilege of calling God “Abba! Father!”. (*Rom.8:15; Gal.4:6*). *Eph.2:19* says we become members “of God’s household”. In *Jn.14:2-3* Jesus said He is preparing for us a dwelling place in His Father’s house.

5). In *Eph.2:12* Paul said that as Gentile sinners we were “excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” But now as Christians we are “Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise”. (*Gal.3:29*). In *Gal.4:28* Paul wrote, “And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.” Now the God of hope is our God and He causes us to abound in hope. (*Rom.15:13*). *2Cor.1:10* says we have set our hope in God. *1Tim.4:10* says we have fixed our hope in the living God. And *Rom.5:5* says, “hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” This hope will not put us to shame. Why? The context of our hope is the love of God. And the love of God is pictured as a river that is continually overflowing and flooding our hearts.

6). *Rom.5:10* says we were once the enemies of God. *Rom.8:7* says we were hostile toward God. *Rom.1:30* says we were haters of God. *Jas.4:4* says we were friends of the world and enemies of God. *1Jn.2:15* says we were lovers of this world. (cf. *2Tim.4:10*). But when God saved us He made us His friends. Jesus said, “You are My friends ... I have called you friends.” (*Jn.15:14-15*). God described Abraham as “My friend”. (*Isa.41:8*). In *Exod.33:11* we are told that the Lord spoke to Moses as a man spoke to his friend. Abraham and Moses were designated as God’s friends.

Jesus says to every one of His disciples, “You are My friends.” Are you Jesus’ friend? Jesus said to you, “You are My friend.” Can you say to Jesus, “You are my friend”? Or, while professing to be Jesus’ friend, are you really a friend of the world? You cannot claim to be Jesus’ friend and at the same time be a friend of the world. If you are Jesus’ friend, the world would hate you. (cf. *Jn.15:19*). If you are a friend of the world, the

world would love you. But, James warned, that those who are friends of the world are the enemies of God. (*Jas.4:4*).

7). In *Rom.9:25-26* we read, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people', and her who was not beloved, 'Beloved'. And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people', there they shall be called sons of the living God." As Christians, we have moved from being not the people of God to being the people of God. We have moved from being "**not beloved**" to being "**Beloved**", the beloved sons and daughters of God.

In *Rom.1:7* we are described as "beloved of God" or as "**God's beloved**". This is an astounding expression. Remember that it is concerning Jesus that the Father declared, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (*Matt.3:17*). Now, those for whom the Beloved Son died has been described as "God's beloved." Murray wrote, "*Beloved of God* points to the intimacy and tenderness of the love of God the Father, the embrace of His people in the bosom of His affection."

In *1Thess.1:4 & 2Thess.2:13* Paul described us as "beloved by the Lord." The word "**beloved**" is a perfect participle and stresses the permanence of the Lord's continuing love for His people. In other words, the Lord will never stop loving His people. In *Jude 1:1* we are described as "beloved in God the Father." Once again, "**beloved**" is a perfect participle. The picture here is that we are permanently and continually enfolded in the sphere of the Father's love.

It is the Father's love and Christ's love for Paul that changed his pharisaical and prejudiced heart and bound him in love for Gentile Christians. And so, despite his many difficulties with the Corinthian Christians, he would write to them, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (*1Cor.15:58*). And he would write to the Philippians who were a continuing joy to his heart, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, whom I long to see." (*Phil.4:1*). God's beloved was Paul's beloved. Christ's beloved was Paul's beloved.

What about you? Has the Father's love and Christ's love changed your prejudiced heart? In the words of apostle John, since God so loved us, how ought we to love one another? (cf. *1Jn.4:11*). Are God's beloved your beloved? Are Christ's beloved your beloved?

In closing, Biblical Christianity changes you. It changes your mind, your will, your heart, your desires, your affections. It changes you radically and completely. This is the basic truth you must come to grips with. This is the Biblical reality you must come to grips with. The caterpillar becomes the butterfly. When you look at the caterpillar, you cannot see how it is possible for that ugly worm to become a thing of beauty and grace that flies. When you look at a sinner you cannot see how this vile person can become a saint. But that's the miracle of the new birth. God can take a vile blasphemer, violent persecutor and prejudiced Pharisee like Saul of Tarsus and make him into Paul the apostle. Paul's point in *1Tim.1:12-17* is that if God could save him, God could save anyone else.

We have not been dealing with sanctification. We have been dealing specifically with conversion and the work God accomplishes in the sinner when He saves the sinner. He changes the sinner. And the question for you is simply this : are you changed? Did God change you? Do you know that God changed you? Do you sense that Divine presence in your soul restraining you and keeping you from simply abandoning your faith in Christ? You think about such abandonment but you can't do it. There are those days when everything in you seems to be pressing you to take the step of abandonment but then you draw back, knowing that you can't do it.

This morning you may be a battered reed or a smoldering wick. Your faith is so weak, you have no hope that it could ever survive. I want to say to you, you are not holding God, God is holding you. God is keeping you. God is keeping that smoldering wick in you alive. I want you to clearly understand something that may sound as if it is antinomian and opening the door to licentiousness. But it is neither antinomian nor licentious.

I want you to clearly understand that your salvation in Christ does not depend on you. Your salvation in Christ depends on God and God alone. Your salvation in Christ does not depend on how strong or weak your faith is. Your salvation in Christ depends on God and God alone. Your salvation in Christ does not depend on how well you can persevere. Your salvation in Christ depends on God and God alone.

Let us settle this matter at the very basic level. There is absolutely nothing you can do that can save you. There is absolutely nothing you can do that can help save you. There is absolutely nothing you can do that can make your salvation in Christ more secure. What are you depending upon to save you and / or make your salvation more secure? Your faith? Your repentance? Your daily devotions? Your church attendance? Your tithes and offerings? Your gifts to missions? Your involvement in evangelism? Your involvement in teaching and / or preaching? Balaam's donkey preached to Balaam, but that didn't make the donkey a Christian. Judas was one of Jesus' disciples. He did everything like the rest of the disciples, including performing miracles. But none of those things made him a Christian. Demas was a fellow missionary with Paul. But that didn't make him a Christian. Diotrephes was the primary elder in his church. But that didn't make him a Christian.

Your only hope of salvation is God, God saving you in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, I urge you today, examine your heart. Make sure your salvation hope is firmly and solely fixed in God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Are you a Christian? You say, *"Yes, I know I am a Christian."* Why?

Paul's answer in *2Tim.1:12* is, "I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." The grammar of this verse is powerful and will take us time to unfold. Paul used three perfect tenses here : "I know ... I have believed ... I am convinced." What I want you to note is this : this letter was written just before Paul was executed. And what is Paul's confidence about his soul's salvation after thirty plus years of service to the Lord as an apostle?

Paul's confidence is not rooted in his apostleship. Paul's confidence is not rooted in his many and great sufferings. Paul's confidence is not rooted in the many churches he established. Paul's confidence is not rooted in the many inspired letters God used him to write. Paul's confidence is not rooted in his impending martyrdom. Paul's confidence is not rooted in the innumerable good works he did for the many people he had to deal with. Paul's confidence is not rooted in the many amazing miracles he worked. Paul's confidence about his soul's salvation is rooted in Christ and Christ alone. Where is your confidence about your soul's salvation rooted?

The question I asked in the first sermon was : If you could use one word to sum up what Biblical Christianity is all about, what will that word be? And my answer was the word **“change”**. My second question is this : If you could use one word to sum up what your Christian life is all about, what will that word be?