

## Powerful Christian Living

### Chapter Nine

#### The New Birth

Being saved, being born-again<sup>1</sup> is the most wonderful and life changing thing that can happen in a person's life. When you believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord of your life and that God has raised him from the dead you are saved.<sup>2</sup> And you are much more than a person who has been forgiven all their sins, you are a changed person.<sup>3</sup>

Sadly too many Christians do not understand this truth. For example I once saw a car bumper sticker that read "A Christian is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread." Now, that sounds humble and religious and there is nothing wrong with being humble. But this is not the whole truth about what the Bible says about a Christian. When you are saved you become not only a forgiven person but a qualitatively different person. The Word of God says,

Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.  
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are a new creation. You are qualitatively different at the core of your being then before you were saved. You have new life in you, the very life of God in Christ in you by way of the Spirit of God. Old fears, old values, old priorities and beliefs can be replaced with new godly values and beliefs. And these values and beliefs lead to a new way of living because of the hope of everlasting life in the coming kingdom of God. Do you remember what Jesus Christ told Nicodemus in John 3?

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

(John 3:1-3)

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<sup>1</sup> Literally, born from above

<sup>2</sup> Romans 10:9, 10

<sup>3</sup> You are encouraged to listen to our read the Bible teaching series "Born Again" in the concluded teaching series archive at [www.graceministryinternational.org](http://www.graceministryinternational.org)

When Nicodemus came to Jesus for more light on the kingdom of God, Jesus didn't say, "Hey Nick, you are on the right track to everlasting life. Just keep doing the best you can and all will be well." That is how most people think about salvation. They say, "Well, basically, I am a good person so God will save me." But Jesus told Nicodemus that we must be born again.

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit<sup>4</sup>, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

(John 3:5-7)

That which is born of the flesh is flesh. And the Bible teaches that in our flesh dwells no good thing.<sup>5</sup> We are descendants of fallen, sinful Adam. And since everything reproduces after its kind we are natural sinners. Therefore we must be born again and given a new nature through the Spirit of God in order to have the hope of everlasting life.

Jesus Christ did not mean that we need to be reborn in some vague metaphorical way. He was talking about a real, radical change in one's essential nature. Just as physical birth is real and we have a human nature, so the new birth is real and we are given a divine nature. The Bible tells us that when we are born again we are born of incorruptible seed we receive a divine nature.

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:22, 23)

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature<sup>6</sup>, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world

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<sup>4</sup> The Lord Jesus was not referring to literal water, or to the ceremony of water baptism, but to true spiritual cleansing from sin. In the Old Testament water is often associated with the Spirit of God to indicate the cleansing from sin and the giving of a new nature in the new covenant (Ezekiel 36:24-27). This image is repeated again in Titus 3:5

<sup>5</sup> Romans 7:18

<sup>6</sup> This new divine nature born within us is the fulfillment of the promise of the new covenant. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-27. Even though this new covenant was initially promised to those in Israel who believed there was a mystery—gentiles who believed would be saved and receive a new nature too. This mystery was revealed to the apostle Paul (Ephesians 2:11-13; 3:1-7). See appendix 2 on the mystery.

through lust.  
(2 Peter 1:2-4)

Having become a partaker of the divine nature, in a very real sense, having been saved and born again, you are a new species. Here is what I mean.

And so it is written, "*The first man Adam became a living being.*"  
The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.  
(1 Corinthians 15:45)

When Adam was created, God breathed into him and Adam became a living being. That which animated him was breath life. But since the time of Adam's sin this breath life is perishable. Adam died and so will all of us unless we are alive at the time of the Lord's return<sup>7</sup>. But the "last Adam" Jesus Christ, in his resurrection became a life-giving spirit. That which gives Jesus life and animates him is not breath life but the Spirit of God.

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. 47 The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. 48 As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.  
(1 Corinthians 15:46-49)

The natural man is the man who lives by breath life and this life perishes. But Jesus is now the spiritual man. And all of us who are saved by faith in Christ will one day be fully like him. When Christ returns we will all be transformed into his glorious immortal image.

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.  
(Philippians 3:20, 21)

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children<sup>8</sup> of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.  
(1 John 3:1-3)

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<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

<sup>8</sup> The Greek word translated "children" is *teknon*. This is a child of natural descent having the seed of his or her father.

Could this really be? Did the love of God for sinners really go this far? Yes indeed. You may look the same as you did before being saved. You may weigh the same as you did before you were born again. You even may feel the same, but you are not the same! You are a new creation in Christ. When you drag yourself into the bathroom in the morning and look in the mirror, you may see a sorry mess. But God sees you as His holy child. You are united to Christ and all that he is and has, you are and have. The Bible says, “as He is, so are we in this world!”<sup>9</sup> The same divine power that raised Christ from the dead is available to you so that you can live a powerful, godly Christian life. God wants you to know,

what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

22 And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

(Ephesians 1:19-23)

Once we were natural men and women, sinners who lived our lives according to the course of this fallen sinful world. But then God united us to Christ when we believed. Our old sin nature was

- crucified with Christ – Galatians 2:20
- died with Christ – Romans 6:3
- was buried with Christ – Romans 6:4

Then by the grace and mercy of God we were

- made alive with Christ – Romans 6:4, Ephesians 2:5
- raised up with him to a position of authority – Ephesians 2:6

And when Christ returns as King of kings then we too will be given immortality and

- appear with him in glory – Colossians 3:1-4

We are now a new creation. We are God’s workmanship or masterpiece.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 1 John 4:17

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 2:1-10)

