

THE NEW-CREATION LIFE

David Kuykendall

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Preface

Christians are different!

It is not uncommon for someone to say to a child of God, “You are not like the rest of us. Why?”

The Bible describes believers as “strangers and pilgrims on this earth.”

First Peter 2:9 calls Christians an “elect race.” (KJV)

Jesus implies that believers in Him would take on qualities unlike the rest of the human race when He stated they would be “born again”—they would be “born of the Spirit.”

Second Corinthians 5:17 describes God’s children as different and gives the reason.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

The children of God are different because they are a “new creation” and they are a new creation because they are “in Christ.”

This work is a development of 2 Corinthians 5:17 under the title “The New-Creation Life.” It will show why being “in Christ” makes believers different; it will discuss how in some believers there is an increasing difference; it will describe some of the differences.

The work is divided into four parts: Part I “The Beginning,” Part II “The Infancy,” Part III “The Growth,” and Part IV “Eternity.”

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Part I

The Beginning

Like the physical life cycle, the new creation has a beginning.

Physical life begins at conception. The new-creation life begins when one receives Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Chapter 1

The Creation Event

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation ...
2 Corinthians 5:17

Believers are “new creations” because they are “in Christ.”

Believers are “in Christ” because they have been immersed into Him.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus ... Romans 6:3a

A study of Romans 5:12-14 is necessary for an understanding of our baptism into Jesus. The key statement in that pas-

sage is in the last few words of verse 14.

... Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

A “type” is a likeness. There is something about Adam that is like Jesus. That is, we can learn something about Jesus by understanding something about Adam. There are enormous differences between Adam and Jesus, but in at least one way they are alike.

A “type” is a likeness. There is something about Adam that is like Jesus. That is, we can learn something about Jesus by understanding something about Adam. There are enormous differences between Adam and Jesus, but in at least one way they are alike.

Verse 12 informs that Adam brought sin and death into the entire human race.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned ... Romans 5:12-14b

When Adam and Eve ate from the wrong tree, they were infected with a sin nature. When God drove them from the Garden of Eden and from the tree of life, the death process began.

Because Adam was the first person in his race, he infected all who are born into his race with the same two problems—sin and death.

Immediately following his revelation that Adam brought sin and death into his entire race, Paul wrote the “type” statement which can be summed up as follows:

First, just as Adam is the head of the natural race, Jesus is the head of the spiritual race.

Second, Just as some things true of Adam became true of us when we entered Adam’s race, some things true of Jesus became true of us when we entered Jesus’ race.

First, just as Adam is the head of the natural race, Jesus is the head of the spiritual race.

Second, Just as some things true of Adam became true of us when we entered Adam’s race, some things true of Jesus became true of us when we entered Jesus’ race.

We entered the race of Adam through physical birth. We entered the race of Jesus through a *spiritual* baptism:

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus ... Romans 6:3

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 Paul explains that the baptism—immersion—of the believer into Christ was by the Holy Spirit: He writes:

For as the body is one and has many members, but all

the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ...

One would have expected Paul to write “as the body is one ... so also is the *church*.” Instead he writes “as the body is one ... so also is *Christ*.” Then he writes:

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ...

At the time we received Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit baptized us into Him.

Immersed Into the Death of Jesus

Romans 6:3 reads:

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

We were crucified when we were baptized into Jesus at conversion.

Often believers have said, “I need to be crucified” or “I need to crucify myself.” Neither is necessary. We only need to experience our crucifixion.

The Scriptures detail four features of our crucifixion.

Our Old Man was Crucified

Following his statement of the believer’s baptism into the crucifixion of Jesus, in Romans 6:6 Paul writes:

... our old man was crucified with Him ...

Our old man is the type of person we became by birth into the race of Adam. We carry in us the DNA of Adam. To understand the significance of the crucifixion of our old man, though, we need a description of him.

When we were born into the race of Adam, we received his sin nature. The Scriptures refer to our sin nature as “sin” and “flesh.”

Since those words alone do little to define our sin nature, we need more insight for a working definition.

Help is found in the record of Adam and Eve eating from the wrong tree. Genesis 3:6 reads:

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Among other things, Adam and Eve believed that when they ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would become wise. In Romans 1:22, after writing that all have rejected Jesus, Paul pens the following:

Professing to be wise, they became fools ...

Our sin nature, referred to in Scripture as “sin” and as “flesh,” can be defined as a “know-it-all attitude”—*we think we are wise.*

Our sin nature, referred to in Scripture as “sin” and as “flesh,” can be defined as a “know-it-all attitude”—*we think we are wise.*

Our old man, though, is more than our sin nature. He is our sin nature plus all it produces in us. There are several passages listing those things it produces.

Following Romans 1:22 Paul spends the rest of the chapter listing things resulting from the “know-it-all attitude.”

The best-known list of things resulting from our sin nature is in Galatians 5:19-21a.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like ...

The words “and the like” indicate that there are more works of the flesh than those listed in the passage.

Our old man—our sin nature and all it produces—was crucified when we received Jesus as Lord and Savior.

We died to sin

Paul introduced his discussion of the believer’s baptism into Christ by declaring that believers had died to sin. In Romans 6:1-2 he writes:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Paul mentions the believer’s death to sin again in Romans

6:11 where he writes:

... reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In verse 2 Paul refers to the believer's death to sin with a verb—"we died to sin"—while in verse 11 he uses an adjective—"dead [ones with reference] to sin."

It is important to notice that Paul precedes his command of Romans 6:11 that Christians "reckon" (believe) themselves to be dead to sin with the following statement about Jesus:

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also ... Romans 6:10

Because Christians have been immersed into the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are to believe that we are dead to sin and alive to God, just as Jesus died to sin and is alive to God.

Keep in mind that "sin" here is our sin nature—the root of our sinful actions and thoughts. Our sin nature has been crucified and we are to believe that we have been crucified "with reference" to our sin nature. That double death is a double victory for the believer.

We Died to the Law

More evangelicals are discovering the strange approach many of us have taken to the Christian life. We would die to defend the message of *being saved by grace*. But many of us teach *living by law* after one becomes a Christian.

There are at least three ways we live by law. We seek to live out the commands of the Bible in human strength and wisdom.

We create our own sets of rules to live by. We live by the one law of “doing our best for Jesus.” All of these approaches ignore the divine power God made available to us in our new creation.

Living out the new-creation life will not permit us to live by law. Read the following from Romans 7:4.

... you ... have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

Our crucifixion eliminates law-living of any type. We are to believe we are dead with reference to law.

We Were Crucified to the World

In Paul’s letter to the Galatians he announces the truth of the believer’s crucifixion to the world. He writes:

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world Galatians 6:14.

Some of the ways of the world have made their way into evangelical ranks. It seems that without realizing it, some of God’s most serious-minded children have embraced worldly thinking and practices.

We need to experience our crucifixion to the world.

Immersed Into the Burial of Jesus

There are two features to the believer’s burial: one relates to crucifixion and the other relates to resurrection.

Our old man who was crucified has been buried away. Our burial is a second lock on the door giving us added victory in keeping our old man out of power.

Our burial is preparation for our resurrection.

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Romans 6:4.

Both Jesus and the believer were buried in preparation for resurrection.

Immersed Into the Resurrection of Jesus

The third and last feature of the new-creation life is the believer's spiritual resurrection.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection ... Romans 6:5.

Follow in your mind the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The life of God entered His body, He left the place of the dead, and days later He was seated at the right hand of the father.

Ephesians 2:4-6 explains that these same three things constitute the believer's resurrection.

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), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ...

All verbs of the three statements in the passage are past tense. These things have already happened.

When God “made us alive,” He came to live in us in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Believers are raised from the spiritually dead when, at conversion, they are drawn away from the worldly crowd to the people of God. Many believers have very vivid memories of this change in their lives.

All believers have been seated with Jesus at the right hand of God.

Experiencing the new-creation life is living out our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

We would all do well to heed the following warning.

Do not look into yourself to believe you are already crucified, buried, and resurrected. Look into the Scriptures.

Part II

The Infancy

As there is an infancy stage to our physical lives, there is an infancy phase in the experience of our new-creation lives.

In those first days following conversion God sovereignly gives a new believer a *foretaste* of what the new-creation life is like. The sovereign experience soon ends.

In many cases it is years before one regains what he had in the *foretaste* days. But whether one regains the blessing of those *foretaste* days in a matter of months or after being a child of God for many years, those first days of experiencing the new-creation life are infancy days.

Unfortunately, some believers never regain them.

Chapter 2

The First Days and Months

In Romans 6:14 the Apostle Paul writes that the one experiencing the new-creation life “under grace.” But what is grace? Consider the following definition.

The grace of God is everything God is—moving freely toward you to meet your every need.

Living by grace is living out of God’s provision. When we say we were saved by grace, we mean we were saved by something God did for us and in us. God was the total resource for our salvation.

When we live by grace, we receive God as our total resource for life.

The Foretaste

In varying lengths of time all believers have lived by grace. In those first days, weeks, or months following our conversion experience, God permitted us a period of “sovereign grace.” For those few days or months “old things had passed away and all things had become new.”

Jesus makes reference to this sovereign grace period to the church at Ephesus with His mention of their “first love.”

Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Revelation 2:4

Ask a recently converted child what changes have come to him and he will almost always answer with words like, “I obey my parents better and I get along with my brothers and sisters better.”

God made Joe a new creation when he was sixteen. The next morning he was amazed to wake up with feelings of love toward a man he did not like.

Jane’s new-creation event at fourteen years of age was followed with a passion for all the world to know Jesus. She began witnessing to the unsaved. She wanted to be a missionary in a foreign country.

The deacon said to his pastor, “I would give anything in the world if I could feel like I did when I was first saved.”

The Apostle Paul describes his sovereign period as days of being “alive.”

I was alive once without the law ... Romans 7:9a

Each believer has his own vivid and significant testimony

of his sovereign grace days.

These are examples revealing a foretaste of what the Christian life is to be.

But the days of sovereign grace always come to an end.

The Ending of the Foretaste Period

Paul explains why we did not continue in sovereign grace. Following his testimony of being alive he adds:

... but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. Romans 7:9

The commandment that came to Paul was the last of the ten commandments. He writes:

I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."
Romans 7:7b

Paul had obviously been covetous as a Pharisee. One day—which was the last day of his sovereign grace period—he began to think of those sinful days and decided that as a believer he would not covet. The commandment had come and his “life” of sovereign grace ended.

Read Paul’s testimony of what happened as a result of his attempts to obey the last of the ten commandments:

... sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire ... Romans 7:8a

When Paul wrote that he died, he did not mean he died physically. He did not lose his salvation. Paul lost the thrilling “life” of grace.

The only believers who escape the “death” Paul writes about are those who consciously and willfully begin to live by grace before the sovereign grace period ends.

The rest of us live through a period of “death.”

Most of us likely came to the end of our sovereign grace period by trying to obey some law a friend passed on to us for reading our Bible, or praying, or witnessing.

In our “death” we attempt to regain “life.” We struggle to have what we had before. And we fail.

The life we are seeking to live is the new-creation life. It is the life of grace. We do not arrive at the life of grace by struggle but by receiving grace.

... those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:17

First Infancy Steps in Receiving Grace

Both the sovereign grace and the “death” of its loss are preparation for the willful and conscious receiving of grace. Read Romans 5:20-21:

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Before one takes those first *conscious and willful* infancy steps for experiencing the new-creation life, though, other preparation is necessary.

We Must Understand We Are Crucified, Buried, and Resurrected

Understanding that the new creation is crucifixion, burial, and resurrection is essential to fully experiencing the new-creation life.

A study of the life of the Apostle Paul reveals the process through which we understand and experience our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

While no one's experience perfectly parallels Paul's, some features of it will be very familiar to you.

- *Understanding comes by divine revelation*

Paul testifies that his understanding of the new-creation life came by divine revelation. The same is true of us.

According to divine timing, God *revealed* to Paul his own crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me ... Galatians 1:15-16a

At first glance, Paul's testimony appears to be only a revelation that Jesus was "in" him. A further look at Scripture enlarges our understanding of the revelation.

First, read Galatians 2:20a:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me ...

Paul relates his understanding of Christ living in him to his crucifixion.

Second, read Paul's listing of the three features of the believer's resurrection.

God ... made us alive together with Christ ... and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ... Ephesians 2:4-6.

Paul's being made "alive" meant the Spirit of Christ coming into his life. His being made alive was accompanied with his being raised and being seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

So, we can conclude that God's revelation of Christ being "in" Paul is a part of the revelation that he was "in" Christ in crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

- ***Understanding comes by divine preparation***

A study of Paul's conversion experience along with other passages in Acts, Romans, and Galatians reveals the process God used to prepare him for the revelation that he was already crucified, buried, and resurrected.

First, God saved Paul on the road to Damascus. Look at the Damascus road account:

As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he

said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting ... Acts 9:3-5a.

In a few seconds Paul did what he later understood one must do to become God's child: In Romans 10:9 he writes:

... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

On the road to Damascus Paul believed Jesus was raised from the dead and confessed Jesus as his Lord. At that moment Paul became a new creature in Christ.

Second, Paul was available to God. Read Acts 9:6.

So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

This is the second time in a brief passage Paul refers to Jesus as "Lord." He further expressed his availability to God with the question, "What do you want me to do?" He both made Jesus his Lord and confessed Him as his Lord.

Even though Paul had his lapses into legalism after conversion, we have no evidence that a passion for availability to God ever left him. Certainly, his heart was yearning for God's power in his life when he went to Arabia where God gave the revelation of his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

Third, Paul had a sense of a calling from God. Read Paul's report of what the Lord said to him at the time of his conversion experience:

I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as

from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me. Acts 26:17-18.

Our sense of calling may not be this definite. In our case we may only know that God has a purpose for our lives and we long for God to fulfill His purpose through us.

Fourth, immediately following his conversion to Christ Paul entered into the period of sovereign grace.

Fifth, as we have seen, when Paul began to live by law the sovereign grace period was over and he discovered that he was utterly sinful and totally incapable of living the Christian life in his own strength.

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. Romans 7:9.

But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. Romans 7:13.

Sixth, Paul realized it was humanly impossible for him, a Jew, to fulfill God's call to take the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles. Read the following.

... when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles ... Galatians 1:15-16a.

Seventh, God sent Paul desperate circumstances. Consider what had happened when Paul preached the message of salvation through Jesus to the Jews.

But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. Acts 9:22-23.

Later Paul was in danger at the hands of the Gentiles.

In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands. 2 Corinthians 11:32

Eighth, Paul never forgot the quality of life he experienced during the sovereign grace period and fervently wanted to return to it.

Ninth, Paul was alone with God. He gives the following testimony concerning the timing of the revelation.

I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia ... Acts 16b-17.

In this place of loneliness, Paul had ample time to reflect on his conversion, his calling, his deep desire, his sovereign grace period, his failures and inadequacies, the rejection of the message by the Jews, the danger at the hands of the Jews and Gentiles, and the Scriptures.

During this time of aloneness with God at the very place God had given Moses the law, God revealed to Paul that on the road to Damascus the Holy Spirit had immersed him into Jesus—and at that moment he was crucified, buried, and resurrected.

Surely, in the following years Paul advanced in his understanding of the new-creation life, but the germ truth became his in Arabia.

God likely never prepares any two people in the same way for understanding their crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Yet, we can see a pattern in Paul's preparation that is not altogether unlike God's dealings with us.

In addition to the revelation of his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection God also revealed five commands that must be obeyed in order to experience crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

We Must Obey Five Commands for Experiencing Crucifixion, Burial, and Resurrection

In Romans 6:3-5 Paul teaches that all believers are crucified, buried, and resurrected. In verses 11-13 he gives five commands believers must obey to experience their crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

Before looking at the commands, it would be helpful to give consideration to the following statement:

There are things true of us in the Christian life we will not experience until we believe they are true of us and choose to experience them.

Each of the five imperatives is a command either to *believe* something or to *choose to do* something—the fourth is a command to do both. Read a brief treatment of each of the five.

- ***Believe you are dead to your sin nature and alive to God***

Romans 6:11 reads:

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Verse 10 declares that Jesus is dead to sin and alive to God.

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

So Paul follows the statement about Jesus with the command for believers to reckon themselves dead to sin and alive to God.

The word “reckon” in verse 11 is better translated as “believe.” Paul has just written that believers are crucified, buried, and resurrected. He now says, “*believe it.*”

Think of “sin” here as our sin nature, our “know-it-all attitude.” Believe that as far as your sin nature is concerned you are a dead person and cannot respond to it.

- ***Let not your sin nature reign in your mortal body***

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. Romans 6:12

The first command is to *believe* what God has said is true of us. The second command is to exercise our will. We must *choose* against the control of our “know-it-all attitude.” We must choose not to live out of our own point of view—but choose God’s point of view in all matters.

Notice the defensive posture of the second command which implies continual onslaughts from the sin nature.

- ***Do not present any member of your body to your sin nature***

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin ... Romans 6:13a

This third command is much like the second command but there is a difference. The second command concerns the entire body while the third command concerns the parts of our bodies. We are not to give any part of our bodies to the control of our own point of view.

The passage says that if we give any part of our bodies to the control of our sin nature, the result will be unrighteousness.

- ***Present yourself to God as one who is crucified, buried, and resurrected***

... present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead ... Romans 6:13b

Many of us have presented ourselves to God over and over. But have we ever presented ourselves to God as one who is crucified, buried, and resurrected? We have not fully obeyed this command if we have *only* presented ourselves to God.

- ***Present the parts of your body to God***

... and [present] your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Romans 6:13c

It is because we present ourselves to God as those crucified, buried, and resurrected that we are able to give the parts of our bodies to God. The passage teaches that when God has access to the parts of our bodies, He uses these parts to do His works of righteousness. When we live out this command, God is doing the living.

When we are obeying these five commands, we are living the new-creation life—we are experiencing our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

The verse following the five commands says, “... you are no longer under law but under grace.”

Before leaving this discussion of the five commands for experiencing the new-creation life, it is important to give attention to what Paul calls the law of the Spirit mentioned in Romans 8:2:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

The word “law” is to be understood like the “law of gravity.” The force of gravitation is always with us. It can be overcome, but it never changes. Romans 8:2 states a work of the Holy Spirit that is always with us. The passage can be translated as follows:

For the law of the Spirit which is abundant life in union with Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

The Holy Spirit is continually working in us to live out the five commands for experiencing the new-creation life.

We can live in obedience to the five commands in the power of divine guidance and energy.

Personal Observations About the Infancy Experiences of the New-Creation Life

This section is titled “*personal observations*” because there are no specific passages referred to.

A Second Sovereign Grace Period

These first *conscious and willful* experiences of the new-creation life lift many into a quality of life not unlike the days of the sovereign grace period.

Gary, a “dedicated” Christian for years, began consciously and willfully experiencing the new-creation life. He says:

I felt a joy and peace that I had never felt before. I felt a release and freedom that I had never experienced before. It was nearly ten days before I felt the pavement below my feet again. It was ten days of humming songs and feeling lightness in each step.

He goes on to say that he was consumed with a desire to read his Bible. He took it to work with him. He read it on his breaks and his lunch hour.

For some there is an almost total freedom from the sins that have brought guilt and frustration for many years—sins over which they could not find victory.

God’s Gracious Exceptions

While there are five commands we must obey in order to

experience our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, God does make exceptions.

Some—perhaps most—have had their second infancy experiences of the new-creation life with only a *partial understanding* of their own crucifixion, burial, and resurrection and through conscious obedience to only some of the imperatives.

Robert had vivid memories of the foretaste period. He had a deep aching in his heart to return to them. He was as committed to God as he knew how to be. Daily he gave himself to God. Daily he pleaded with God to fill him with the love he had in the foretaste days.

When the revelation from God came that he was to believe he was dead to sin and alive to God, he began to obey the command. Immediately his life began to change.

The conscious infancy experiences had begun for Robert—even though he was obeying only the first two of the five commands.

Infancy Experiences Without a Follow-Through

Those early infancy experiences through obeying the five commands must be repeated over and over. The commands must be obeyed again and again. Unfortunately, for different reasons some do not follow through.

- ***Because of thinking they have arrived***

When one begins—partially or fully—to obey the commands for experiencing the new-creation life, the changes are thrilling and dramatic. He may think he has become all God wants him to be and is doing all God wants him to do.

Those infancy experiences, however, are just that—*infancy experiences*. But they are filled with great promise of what can continue to happen in the future. They have the promise of growth about them. They are not, though, signs of maturity in experiencing the new-creation life.

Yet, some may think they are mature and cease to obey the five commands.

- ***Because of the opposition of Satan***

Satan hates the new-creation life. He knows that the one who matures in experiencing the new-creation life is on his way to the life God intends for him and on his way to serious opposition to him.

Because Satan understands the power of those who grow in the experience of the new-creation life, he uses every method he has and every person he can to make life difficult for them. The difficulties may cause some to turn back.

- ***Because of the opposition of fellow believers***

Perhaps some have rejected the message of grace because they have served God many years and see no need to give attention to crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Consequently, they may become critics of those who do experience the new-creation life.

Their criticism may cause some who have begun to experience the new-creation life to reject it also.

- ***Because of the shock of the end of the “sovereign” victory***

It is natural that there will be a lessening of high emotion

when the “sovereign” period of consciously and willfully experiencing crucifixion, burial, and resurrection comes to an end.

It is then that real growth really begins. Yet, for some with the emotional let down comes discouragement and they do not continue in the walk of grace.

- ***Because of God-given faith-building circumstances***

The new-creation life is a life of total dependence on God. It is a life of *growing* in total dependence on God. One’s first experiences of the new-creation life seem to open the door for God to give circumstances that will enhance the life of faith.

Paul’s thorn in the flesh is a perfect example. Read the passage:

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”
2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Sadly, some who do not understand the purpose of the thorns never move on to the mature experience of an ongoing obedience to the five imperatives for living out the life of grace.

If, though, we continue in obedience to the five commands for experiencing the new-creation life, we will live a life of increasing dependence on God.

Part III

The Growth

A growing infant is a delight to watch. We thrill at the growth of children at each stage of growth.

As a growing infant cries less and talks more, he is a picture of the growing believer who is progressively freed from the attitudes and acts of his sinful nature and is more and more filled with the qualities of God.

As the world of the growing child's interests and activities expands, he is a picture of the growing believer as God gives inner growth resulting in an expanding outer service to mankind.

Section I

The Way of Growth

As the child grows physically through proper food and exercise, there are necessities for growing in the new-creation life.

The most important statement on growing in the new-creation life is Romans 6:16—which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Living Out the Growth Process

We know the ways and evidences of physical growth. We also can know the ways and evidences of growth in the new-creation life.

The Way of Growth in the New-Creation Life

Following the God-given formula of Romans 6:11-13 for experiencing the new-creation life by experiencing crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, the Scriptures provide the formula for *growing* in the experience. Read Romans 6:16:

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves

slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

At first glance, this seems to be a strange verse. It is a statement about obedience. It is a verse of opposites. The strangeness of the verse is in the opposites. It places obedience to sin against obedience to obedience.

One would expect the word “God” to be placed opposite sin. Why is it not?

Paul uses the word “obedience” to refer back to the commands of Romans 6:11-13 for experiencing the new-creation life.

It is not just the closeness of the verse to the five commands that indicates the reference is to them. Notice that the last of the five commands ends with the result of righteousness. Verse 16 does the same.

The tense of the Greek word translated “present” in Romans 6:16 indicates continual action. When we continue to present ourselves obedient to those five commands, we will become slaves to them.

As we grow in our slavery to the commands, we grow in our experience of the new-creation life.

Having examined the way of growth, we now turn to the areas of growth.

The Areas of Growth in the New-Creation Life

In understanding the areas of our growth in the new-creation life we look at Colossians 3:9-10—another passage

concerning the new-creation life. The passage reads:

... you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him ...

Before commenting on the meaning of the verse, it is important that we consider a statement made earlier.

There are things true of us in the Christian life we will not experience until we believe they are true of us and choose to experience them.

We put off the old man and put on the new man when we received Jesus as Lord and Savior. However, to experience the putting off of the old man and putting on of the new man we must obey the five commands of Romans 6:11-13

We Are Being Renewed in Knowledge

The word translated “renewed” in the above passage is one of continual action. The new man is being renewed.

As we live out the new-creation life—putting off the old man and putting on the new—the Holy Spirit gives us new insights.

- ***A Growing knowledge of God***

One living out the new-creation life receives expansive revelations about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

- ***A growing knowledge of the new-creation life***

In our first days of understanding and experiencing the new-creation life most of us know very little about it. As we grow in the experience, we have a much better grasp of all it involves.

- ***A growing knowledge of the human heart***

Growing in the experience of the new-creation life results in our knowing ourselves better—and we know the hearts of others better.

- ***A growing knowledge of the Scriptures***

Many have said that when they began experiencing the new-creation life, they began to see it all through the Scriptures. They see it because the new-creation life is a life of total dependence on God—and that it is taught throughout the Scriptures.

We Are Becoming More Like God

Read again Colossians 3:9-10:

... you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him ...

The words “according to the image of Him who created him” can be translated “in the direction of the image of Him who created him.” We are being renewed in the direction of God. Gradually we become more like God.

- ***Because of a growing experience of God***

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul provides a profound revelation of the possibilities of experiencing God. Paul writes:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

This is life in the enthroned position available to all those of the new-creation life. As believers experience God, more and more His glory comes upon them.

- ***Because old things are passing away***

The experience of the new-creation life is that of a growing deliverance from our sin nature and the sins it produces in our lives. It is deliverance from sins that have grieved us. It is also deliverance from sins we were not aware of when we first began experiencing the new-creation life.

- ***Because all things are becoming new***

In Galatians 4:19 Paul gives a very distinctive expression of the increase of the expression of the attributes of God in and through our lives. He writes:

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you ...

Paul likens the growth of Christ in the life of a believer to that of a fetus in the body of the mother.

People see more and more of Jesus in the life of the one living out the new-creation life.

Section II

Growing in Family Characteristics

The man said, “Christians are boring. They are all just alike.” He meant it as a put down of believers. But without knowing it, he spoke a great truth.

All of God’s children are members of the same spiritual family and possess common family features.

The more we grow in the new-creation life the more alike we become.

... you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in know-

ledge according to the image of Him who created him.
... Colossians 3:10

As stated in the last chapter, the words “according to” have in them the idea of “in the direction of.” All who are growing in the new-creation life are becoming more like God.

Each of the following chapters discusses one of the family features expressing itself in the life of one experiencing the new-creation life.

The following chapters are divided into two groups. The first group treats the characteristics of the new-creation life from “in Christ” passages *beyond* 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. The last five chapters develop the characteristics presented *within* that passage.

Chapter 4

Growing in Freedom From the Power of Sin

Notice the singular—“sin.” For a person to be in bondage to “sins” he first is in bondage to “sin”—the sin nature inherited from Adam. Said another way, “a person in bondage to “sin” will also be in bondage to *some* “sins.”

Those who live out the new-creation life are free from bondage to sin and sins.

Believers in Bondage to Sin

Read the following passages indicating bondage to sin.

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves

slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? Romans 6:16.

But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. Romans 6:17

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Romans 6:20

In Romans 6:16 Paul clearly speaks of *believers* being in bondage to sin. In the other two passages he could be speaking both of believers and non-believers.

Even if we did not have the statements of Paul, we know by personal experience and through testimonies of others that believers can be in bondage to sin.

The Tragedy of Bondage to Sin

We all pay a price through our bondage to sin and sins—whether our sins are of the body or of the spirit—sins such as anger, jealousy, hatred, and covetousness.

Bondage to sin means separation from righteousness.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Romans 6:20

This is not to say that every believer who is in bondage to one or two particular *sins* is never used of God. It does mean there are limitations on that person's usefulness to God.

In our bondage to sin we will say and do things we will be ashamed of later.

What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? Romans 6:21a

Our bondage to sin brings death.

For the end of those things is death. Romans 6:21b

“Death” here describes the spiritual and emotional pain one goes through when he cannot free himself from certain sins.

The Benefits of Our Freedom From the Power of Sin

The benefits of freedom from sin are the opposite of the price we pay because of our bondage to sin. We are free to do the works of righteousness, we are free from the shame we experience because of sin and we are free from the emotional death we experience because of sin. In Romans 6:18 Paul writes:

And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Paul makes another statement in Romans 6:22 about freedom from sin that is of great significance.

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

“Holiness” means availability to God and will be thoroughly treated in following chapters.

The “everlasting life” Paul mentions has to do with both

endless life and the quality of one's present life—a reference to the abundant life. This surely is what Jesus meant when He said that He had come that we might have life and have it more abundantly.

As one continues to live out the five commands of Romans 6:11-13, he has a growing freedom from the power of sin.

Chapter 5

Growing in Freedom From Legalism

On the first missionary journey of Christian history, the Apostle Paul and Barnabas took the gospel to the Roman province of Galatia. In four towns they led people to Christ, resulting in the beginning of churches in each town. Paul and Barnabas taught the new believers how to live out the new-creation life.

After their departure from Galatia false teachers arrived, telling the people that the way to righteousness was by keeping the law of the Old Testament. Some of the Galatian believers followed them and others were considering it.

When Paul heard what had happened, he was devastated.

He wrote a fiery letter concerning the matter.

Among other things, he informed the Galatians that believers living by law were in the bondage of slavery. He compared believers who lived by law to Ishmael the son of the slave-girl Hagar. He said believers are free like Isaac the son of Sarah. Then he wrote:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Galatians 5:1

Believers are free from the law. They should stand in that freedom—and not return to the bondage of slavery.

Many believers know the message of salvation by grace, but like some of the Galatians, they live in a law arrangement as slaves and are not free.

Freedom Through Crucifixion

Romans 8:3 is a key verse for understanding that the believer's experience of crucifixion frees him from a relationship with the law. The verse reads:

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh ...

The law arrangement God made with the Jewish nation was an arrangement between His laws and their flesh.

When God gave the law, three times the Jewish people said, "What God has said we will do."

There is the law arrangement. God says, "Do this or that

or do not do this or that,” and man says, “I will.”

The Jewish people committed themselves to keep the law in human strength. That is the nature of any arrangement between God’s laws and man’s flesh.

In addition to making commitments to keeping the commands of the Bible in human strength we believers have created other law arrangements.

Many of us have resolved to live by the one law of doing our best for Jesus. Many of us have sought to live by man-made rules for Bible reading, prayer, and witnessing.

Anytime we decide what we will do for Jesus—whatever it is—we are trusting in our own ability and that is a law-like arrangement.

Anytime we decide what we will do for Jesus—whatever it is—we are trusting in our own ability and that is a law-like arrangement.

The Holy Spirit always leads believers to pray, read their Bibles, and witness. He may even give us plans and schedules for reading the Bible, prayer, and witnessing. When the plan is from the Lord and He is enabling us to live out His plans, we are not in the flesh.

When we experience our crucifixion, we put the flesh out of power. And when the flesh is out of power, one participant in a law arrangement is not available. Therefore when we experience crucifixion, we are free from marriage

to any law arrangement.

Growing in Freedom From an Oppressive Marriage

All of Romans chapter seven concerns the believer and the law. The chapter begins with the following:

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Romans 7:1-3

This seems to be a strange place to interject statements concerning marriage and remarriage. Yet, it is the perfect place because it is intended to illustrate an important feature of the new-creation life. Verse four reads:

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

Before discussing the illustration it is important that we look at the concept of living by law as a marriage to law.

Why would we think that one seeking to keep law is an arrangement so intimate it would be called a marriage?

The answer may be two things: *a passion to be accepted by God and an inborn belief that we must deserve our acceptance by God.*

The result of those two things is a passionate commitment to law—a commitment that is like that of a wife longing to please her husband.

The purpose of the illustration of verses 1-3 is to point out that death dissolves a marriage and makes possible remarriage.

The application of the illustration in verse four is that when a believer experiences crucifixion, his marriage to the law is dissolved. He is free to live as the bride of Christ.

There are several reasons a believer's marriage to law is oppressive.

First, as has been mentioned, Paul wrote to the Galatians that such an arrangement is slavery—it is bondage.

Second, the husband of the law-believer relationship only makes demands. The husband never lifts a finger to aid the bride in living out the commands. The husband is a taskmaster.

Third, the bride of the marriage relationship has committed herself to an unmerciful husband for a lifetime of certain failure.

In Romans 7:18 the Apostle Paul declares:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

The legalist lives a life of failure upon failure. He is

like the animal under the yoke of his owner that tries and tries to get over some impossible barrier.

In Romans 7:15 Paul writes:

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

Here Paul testifies that in the flesh he not only is a failure in keeping the “dos” of the law but he is also a failure in keeping the “do nots” of the law.

Fourth, the ultimate result for the wife—the believer—of the relationship is an emotional and spiritual condition so oppressive it could be described only with the word “death.” Read Paul’s testimony of Romans 7:9 about his marriage to law:

I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived and I died.

In continuing to live out the new-creation life we are free from an oppressive marriage. We also are liberated from a dangerous marriage.

Growing in Freedom From a Dangerous Marriage

There are several lists in the New Testament of things created by the flesh. The best-known list is Galatians 5:19-21a. It reads:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idola-

try, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like ...

All of us together are guilty of all the things listed above and of “the like” things. Likely, not any one of us is guilty of all of the things in this and other lists of works of the flesh in the New Testament.

However, when we are not living out our new-creation life and are living in a marriage relationship to the law, we are capable of committing any of the works of the flesh.

There are many tragic stories of moral and spiritual church and community leaders who fell into gross sins.

It can happen to the most sincere believer who is not living out the new-creation life and experiencing freedom from marriage to law and freedom from the power of the flesh at work in us.

Continuing in the new-creation life results in a growing freedom from an oppressive and dangerous marriage.

In the following chapter we will read of the believer being free to live as the bride of Jesus.

Chapter 6

Growing in Freedom to Live as the Bride of Christ

The New Testament truth that the church is the bride of Christ has received some attention in Christian literature. The kindred truth that each *believer* can live as the bride of Christ has not received equal attention.

Through freedom from legalism a believer is able to live as the bride of Christ.

Paul lays the groundwork for teaching this marriage relationship in Romans 7:1-3 when he states that a woman can have two husbands if the first one dies. Death makes possible the second marriage. He follows with verse four declaring:

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead

to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

When a believer experiences crucifixion, his marriage to law is nullified, and he is free to live as the bride of Christ.

Jesus is our waiting groom ready for us to break our marriage with law through experiencing the new-creation life that we might enter into a marital relationship with Him.

The Contribution Jesus Brings to The Spiritual Marriage

Ephesians 5:22-33 teaches that Jesus' relationship to the church expresses what earthly husbands and wives are to bring to a marriage.

So, the passage also reveals the responsibilities Jesus accepts in His marriage to individual believers.

Jesus Accepts Responsibility as Head of the Marriage

For the husband is head of the wife ... Ephesians 5:23a

Jesus is the decision-maker of the marriage. He has perfect wisdom for every situation and is not reluctant to tell us what to do.

Jesus Loves His Bride With a Divine Love

Husbands, love your wives ... Ephesians 5:25

Jesus has proven His love time and again. We never have to wonder about His love for us.

Jesus Works for the Sanctification, Purity, Glory, and Perfection of His Bride

Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:25-27

Jesus Nourishes and Cherishes His Bride

For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. Ephesians 5:29

Jesus nourishes His bride. He provides food for her body. He provides food for her spirit by teaching her the word of God. The idea of “cherish” is warmth. Jesus provides His bride both physical and spiritual warmth. He gives the bride those warm feelings of having a sense of worth and fulfillment.

The Contribution the Bride Brings to the Spiritual Marriage

Again, our attention is on the commands of Ephesians 5:22-33 that speak to the responsibilities of the bride in the marriage relationship.

The Bride Brings a Spirit of Submission to the Marriage

Jesus has accepted the responsibility of giving leadership to this spiritual marriage relationship. We limit His ability to

be what He wants to be in the relationship if we do not accept His leadership. If we are to free Jesus to be the loving provider He desires to be, we must have a spirit of submission to Him.

Wives, submit to your own husband ... Ephesians 5:22

This passage relates back to Ephesians 5:18 where we are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The passage teaches that when a wife is filled with the Holy Spirit, she will be submissive to her husband.

... just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.
Ephesians 5:24

Submission is giving up our point of view about what we are to do next. It means being available to what Jesus knows we should do next. Our submissiveness goes to every area of life.

The Bride Brings a Spirit of Respect to the Marriage

Ephesians 5:33b reads:

... let the wife see that she respects her husband.

It is not difficult for any of us to respect the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Ultimate Issue of the Marriage

The marriage of Jesus to a believer living out the new-creation life is a marriage of two people who are crucified, buried, and resurrected—two people living in the heavenlies.

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. Romans 7:4

The ultimate issue of this heavenly, spiritual marriage is fruit to God.

Such a glorious result should be a most encouraging message to the person who has been serving God with much disappointment because of little fruit. *Let us enter into the new-creation life and into a marriage relationship with Jesus—and bring forth fruit to God.*

We have observed the beauty of the growth of Christian marriages. The marriage relationship between Jesus and the new-creation ones can grow in the same manner. It can increase in producing abundant fruit to God.

Chapter 7

Growing in Freedom From the World

As Tom would pray and read the Scriptures, he began to feel uncomfortable about a certain thing in his life. The best Christians he knew not only participated in the same activity—they promoted it. Yet, Tom continued to be uncomfortable about the matter—especially when he would pray and read his Bible.

One day as Tom was praying, the Lord said, “Tom, that is as worldly as it can be.”

Tom knew of no one who believed it was worldly. But from the moment the Lord spoke to him—and that in light of Scriptures he was reading—he believed it was of the world.

A subtle enemy of triumphant Christian living is possessing a spirit of worldliness without realizing it.

One reason we may have undetected worldliness in our lives may be that we have modeled our lives after believers who have worldliness in their lives.

Whatever the reason, the Scriptures indicate that there is a tendency on the part of believers to conform to the world. One of the best-known verses of the Bible reads:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed ... Romans 12:2

One of the reasons Saul became king of Israel was that the Israelites wanted to be like the other nations.

What is Worldliness?

Worldliness in the life of a believer can be defined as those areas of his life which are in conformity with the ways of the population in general and out of harmony with Scripture.

Examining Our Lives For Worldliness

If we would examine our lives for worldliness we could start by finding the conflicts between the teachings of the Scriptures and the conduct of the general public. If we see that some features of our lives conform to the lives of the general public more than to the Scriptures, we can assume that in those areas we have worldliness in our lives.

A second way to discover worldliness in our lives begins with a familiarity with the words recorded in Galatians 6:14.

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Just as we can reckon ourselves dead to sin, we can reckon ourselves crucified to the world and the world crucified to us. As one begins this work of reckoning, the heart is open to a word from the Lord. The Lord will not disappoint.

Just as we can reckon ourselves dead to sin, we can reckon ourselves crucified to the world and the world crucified to us. As one begins this work of reckoning, the heart is open to a word from the Lord. The Lord will not disappoint.

If there are ways of worldliness in us, the Lord will point them out. He may reveal areas of worldliness by guiding us to passages of Scripture revealing a way of life contrary to our present lifestyle.

The Dangers of Worldliness

We mention here only three of the more obvious dangers of a believer having worldliness in his life.

First, we do not offer the lost of this world a lot of hope when they see in us things they despise in themselves. We all have heard that worn-out statement, “If that is Christianity,

then I don't want any part of it.”

Second, we may be leading some God-loving believer into worldliness.

Third. Worldliness in our lives will disturb our walk with the Lord. When the Lord touches an area of worldliness in us, He will continue to speak to us about it. And we will be in a state of discomfort until we deal with it.

Freedom From Worldliness

There are two features to our freedom from worldliness.

First, we gain our freedom from worldliness by experiencing our crucifixion as we reckon (believe) and choose ourselves crucified to the world and the world crucified to us—in harmony with the teaching of Galatians 6:14.

Second, we gain our freedom from worldliness by experiencing our resurrection. Read again the three features of our resurrection as listed by Paul.

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), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ... Ephesians 2:4-6

Now read about our raising up in Romans 6:4.

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

The raising of Christ is said to be from the dead. The word “dead” is in the plural. In fact, every time the New Testament makes mention of Jesus being raised from the dead the plural is used. And every time it can be translated “the dead ones.”

We were raised from the spiritually dead ones. We were raised out from among the people of the world.

Every person who accepted Jesus as a teenager or adult can well remember how he was drawn away from close fellowship with the unsaved to close fellowship with his church acquaintances.

Every believer saved as a child can remember separating himself from his childhood friends who were not Christians when they began to act like the “dead ones” they were.

Believers are like boats. To fulfill their purpose for existence boats must be in water without water being in them. Christians must have touch with the world to fulfill their calling to bring the lost to Christ. They must not permit the world to be in them.

A continuing experience of our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection will result in a progressive deliverance from worldly ways.

Chapter 8

Growing in Experiencing the Power of the Holy Spirit

Historically, many evangelicals have not given constant attention to the Holy Spirit. He is God. The Scriptures abound with teachings about Him.

Evangelicals have given even less attention to the New Testament truth of believers being filled with the Holy Spirit.

On the day of Pentecost the believers began to speak the wonderful works of God in the languages of the many gathered in Jerusalem because they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures preface the Apostle Peter's statement to the Jewish leaders about the healing of a cripple with:

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them ...
Acts 4:8a

Soon after this event the church gathered for prayer.

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:31

When the Apostles gave the church direction for the selection of the first deacons, they said:

Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom ... Acts 6:3

Ephesians 5:18 commands believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit:

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit ...

How Believers Are Filled With The Holy Spirit

There are biblical truths we must understand and things we must do to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Things We Must Understand To be Filled With the Holy Spirit

As we had to understand some things to become Christians, there are things we must understand to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

- ***Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not something a believer deserves.***

Just as we do not deserve our salvation, we do not deserve the filling of the Holy Spirit.

If we could get beyond the misconception that we must deserve being filled with the Holy Spirit, it would be easier for us to understand the New Testament teaching of how we are filled with the Spirit.

- ***The Holy Spirit continuously seeks to fill the heart of every believer***

When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well, He spoke of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to fill those in whom He lives.

... but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. John 4:14

The word translated “fountain” can also be translated “spring.” That is the idea of the statement of Jesus. From the moment a person receives Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit within him is a spring springing up.

The spring in us is like a spring in a field. It never ceases springing up.

The words of Jesus mean that the Holy Spirit has been seeking to fill us from the moment we accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior.

- ***The opposition of our flesh prevents the filling with the Spirit***

The Apostle Paul speaks to this issue in Galatians 5:17.

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Things We Must do to be Filled With the Holy Spirit

When a believer obeys the five commands of Romans 6:11-13, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. In obeying these commands the believer puts the flesh out of power and yields his life to the control of God's Spirit.

Blessings and Evidences of Being Filled With the Holy Spirit

Entire books have been written on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Our brief space here allows no more than an introduction to a few of the benefits and evidences of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the best-known passage listing the blessings of being filled with the Spirit is Galatians 5:22-23a.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

When we are filled with the Spirit of God, we are filled with the fruit of the Spirit.

Another passage listing bountiful blessings of being filled with the Holy Spirit is Ephesians 5:18-22.

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Romans 8:3-4 makes clear that when we walk in the Spirit, the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in us.

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Himself will fulfill the righteousness of the law in us.

Romans 8:5-16 provides a contrast between living in the flesh and living in the Spirit. The statements about the flesh should serve as a warning while the statements about the Holy Spirit should thrill the heart of every believer.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

The filling of the Holy Spirit results in involvement in evangelism. Read the words of Jesus concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in evangelism.

But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will

bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning. John 15:26-27

A companion verse is Acts 1:8 when Jesus spoke again about the coming of the Holy Spirit.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

There is much more to be said about the blessings and evidences of being filled with the Spirit.

If we, however, would take time to meditate just on the passages quoted, we would realize that when we are filled with the Spirit, our lives are changed and fulfilled.

Being filled with the Spirit touches every area of our lives.

As those of the new creation, we can experience the filling of the Holy Spirit. We can grow day-by-day in the experience.

As we grow in the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit, we grow in living in spiritual power.

Chapter 9

Growing in Living in Two Worlds At the Same Time

In his conversation with Nicodemus Jesus said:

“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven ... John 3:13a

With His feet planted firmly on planet earth—and years before His death, resurrection, and ascension—Jesus testified that he had “ascended to heaven.”

With those words Jesus introduced the thought of living in heaven and on earth at the same time.

Living in Two Worlds—Abundantly Taught in the Scriptures

In the very first command for experiencing our new-creation life, Romans 6:11, Paul mentions life with God in heaven. This is more clearly seen when we quote verse 10 with verse 11. The passage reads:

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Just as Jesus is seated with God the Father in heaven, we are to believe we are there with Him. The thought is stated in even clearer words in Ephesians 2:4-6 where Paul writes:

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), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ...

In Colossians 3:1-2 Paul writes:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth

The “If” that begins the passage should be translated “Since.” We are “... where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.”

The Book of Hebrews describes the same experience as entering into the heavenly Holy of Holies.

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith ... Hebrews 10:19-22a

In a later passage the author of Hebrews changes the picture of believers in heaven. Notice he does not write “will come” but writes “have come.”

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. Hebrews 12:22-24

Living in Two Worlds—A Way of Life to be Zealously Sought

In Philippians 3:13b-14 the Apostle Paul declares that he had reduced his life to the pursuit of one thing.

... one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

But what is that one thing he is pressing to reach?

In verse 11 Paul had expressed his one desire with the words:

... if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

But what does Paul's "attain to the resurrection" mean?

Nowhere in Paul's writings do we read of his doubts about being raised from the dead. Nowhere in Paul's writings do we read of his "attaining" salvation that he might be among those raised from the dead.

Further proof that verse 11 does not refer to bodily resurrection is that the word translated "resurrection" is never used again in the Greek New Testament.

We must conclude that the "resurrection from the dead" in Philippians 3:11 does not refer to bodily resurrection.

Read again the three features of our spiritual resurrection in Ephesians 2:4-6 quoted above.

The one feature of resurrection life Paul had not continually experienced was life in the heavenlies. He believed he was apprehended to attain that. He had not "apprehended" it.

Life for Paul was reduced to the one pursuit of living in two worlds at the same time.

One is reminded of the words of Jesus to Martha when she became disturbed that Mary would not help her. All Mary wanted to do was sit at the feet of Jesus listening to Him talk.

Martha complained to Jesus. Jesus responded to Martha:

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has

chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:41-2

“One thing is needed” and Mary had “chosen” it.

When he wrote Philippians 3:11-14 Paul was saying he had reduced his life to one thing—sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Sitting at the feet of Jesus in the heavenlies is a spiritual reality. It is also a spiritual possibility. One can do so while walking, running, driving a car, riding in an airplane, or engaging in conversation with someone.

King David expressed the spirit of the “one thing.”

One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: 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. Psalm 27:4

Jesus, David, and Paul all sound the same note. The ultimate in Christian experience is living continuously in the presence of God.

Living in the heavenlies, living in the holy of holies, and living in Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and the heavenly Jerusalem are all about experiencing life in two worlds.

Living in Two Worlds—An Active Life

It would be easy for someone to conclude that living the resurrection life is sitting around the house trying to communicate with Jesus.

However, when one lives out the resurrection life as God planned it, he will be the most active Christian servant around.

Read the words of Paul—a man passionate about living in the heavenlies:

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 1 Corinthians 15:10

Paul was aware that he was by far the hardest worker he knew. The Greek word for “labored” means to labor to the point of weariness. Paul writes to the Thessalonians of working day and night. When one reads his testimony recorded in 2 Corinthians 11, he can only conclude that Paul was a busy man.

Yet, Paul obviously often experienced life in the heavenlies.

One need not fear a reduction of activity in ministry by seeking the experience of life in the heavenlies.

Experience has shown that those who have sought life in the heavenlies have seen an increase in their Christian service opportunities and victories.

Living in Two Worlds—a Life of Power

Read again Paul’s listing of the features of resurrection life noticing what he writes about life in the heavenlies.

... made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:6b-9

To be seated in the heavenlies is to be in the place of grace. To be in grace is to be in the power of God.

Kenny, a denominational worker, testifies that when he began living the new creation life, the power for Christian living he had sought became a reality. Living in the heavenlies gives him a peace as he enters and participates in the many planning meeting his ministry makes necessary-

Kenny, a denominational worker, testifies that when he began living the new creation life, the power for Christian living he had sought became a reality. Living in the heavenlies gives him a peace as he enters and participates in the many planning meetings his ministry makes necessary.

Notice what Paul said about resurrection living in Ephesians 1:19-23.

... and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, 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. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Just as Jesus is in the heavenlies far above Satan, so are believers. And we can experience life in such a position of power.

A much fuller discussion of the blessings of life in the heavenlies is presented in my book “The Pursuit of the Upward Call.”

When Paul mentioned that he had reduced his life to one thing, he also mentioned that even though God saved him for that one thing he had not arrived there. He was still pursuing that worthy goal.

When Paul mentioned that he had reduced his life to one thing, he also mentioned that even though God saved him for that one thing he had not arrived there. He was still pursuing that worthy goal.

But the entire passage indicates Paul was growing in that direction. He was increasing in the experience. It was becoming more and more a reality in his life.

And so it can be with us.

Chapter 10

Growing in Freedom To Live For Jesus

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

This passage is in the context of Paul's discussion of the new-creation life because of its nearness to the statement on the new creation and because of the theme of the passage.

Occasionally, we hear someone say, "It's hard to live for the Lord." When a young man accepts God's call to enter the ministry, we say, "John, *surrendered* to preach." The

very wording we use implies a struggle.

Often, entering the ministry is a struggle and it is “hard” for some to live for the Lord.

When, though, we live out the new-creation life, living for Jesus no longer is the difficult thing many have found it to be.

Of course, few things give that sense of inner peace and fulfillment to a God-loving person like knowing he has lived out a day for the Lord Jesus.

The passage shows that one is free to live for Jesus when freed from the lifestyle of living for self.

Living the new-creation life gives us freedom from that selfishness and enables us to live for Jesus.

Freedom Through Crucifixion

Read again the following words of the passage:

... If One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves but for Him who died for them and rose again.

The reference is to our crucifixion when we received Jesus as Lord and Savior. When we experience crucifixion, we are free from selfish living.

We must continually realize what our sin nature is. *We think we are wise*. There is something about this faith in our own wisdom that results in us making ourselves the center of our world. Things must go our way.

Because we think we are wise, we want others to agree with us. One way of securing this agreement is by impressing others with our ability to accumulate or achieve. In its most

intense form such an approach to life is cruel. It steps on anyone who gets in the way.

Such an approach leaves people who should be objects of our love and attention with a deep vacuum in their spirits.

An examination of passages listing works of the flesh which at least imply selfishness vividly demonstrates the many ways we can be guilty of it:

Adultery, fornication, passion, covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, lying to one another, employees working only when the supervisor is near, hatred contentions, jealousies, selfish ambitions, dissensions, envy, murder, drunkenness, revelries, strife, deceit, backbiters, proud, boasters, disobedient to parents, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful, bitterness, thefts, and false witness.

When we experience our crucifixion, the flesh and all its selfish activities are put out of power and we are filled with the Spirit of Christ. Read Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me ...

To speak of Christ living in us is another way of saying “living for Jesus.”

Freedom to Serve Others

When we read the four gospels, we read one story after another of Jesus serving others. He said:

The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve

and to give his life a ransom for many ... Mark 10:45

When this same Jesus lives through us, we are servants of others.

This fact is emphatically underlined by Paul's new-creation statement of Ephesians 2:10. It reads:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

A result of living out the new-creation life is freedom from selfishness and freedom to be servants.

Freedom to be Great

At times, we all refer to someone as "great."

Almost always the "great one" is a person of unusual wisdom and knowledge, strong personality, exceptional ability, or daring courage.

Those qualities greatly reduce the number of those who would ever be described as "great."

Jesus, however, provided a definition that brings to the forefront people of a different type.

Ten of Jesus' disciples overheard James and John ask Jesus for the privilege of sitting on his right hand and left hand when He came into His kingdom. When the ten heard the questions, they were greatly displeased with James and John. Jesus then called them to Himself and said:

"You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones

exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:41-45

Step-by-step the 2 Corinthian 5:14b-15 passage shows how the new-creation life results in service to others. As a result the passage also reveals that a believer growing in living out the new-creation life is maturing as one of the “great ones.”

Chapter 11

Growing in Correctly Evaluating Others

A church had just extended a call to a man to be its pastor. Outwardly, he had all the qualities it took to be an outstanding pastor. While most of the congregation celebrated the event, one person stood at the back of the sanctuary weeping. She knew the church had made a mistake in evaluating the person.

In time, the entire church realized its mistake. The result was sadness, grief, and a loss of time in the church becoming what God wants it to be.

We all have had plenty of practice evaluating others. We do it all the time. Some of it, of course, is not necessary. But some of it is.

People choose lifetime companions for marriage. Churches call pastors and staff members and place lay members in positions of responsibility. Businesses hire new employees. Individuals make new relationships and transact business deals based on their evaluation of others.

Incorrect Evaluations are Common

Sadly, we have all made the mistake of incorrectly evaluating someone.

The Apostle Paul admitted he had made errors in judgment. He evaluated Jesus as an inferior, uneducated Nazarene radical. He explained the reason in 2 Corinthians 5:16. He writes:

... from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

There is no better illustration of someone evaluating a person according to the flesh than the incident of Samuel at the home of Jesse to anoint one of his sons King of Israel.

Jesse brought Eliab, his first-born, before Samuel. Eliab had such physical qualities Samuel immediately concluded he was to be the next king of Israel. He was wrong.

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

In time the Lord revealed to Samuel that he was to anoint

the youngest of Jesse's sons, David, to be king. David seemed so insignificant to his father that he was not even invited to the anointing event.

How often have we heard someone say, "If so-and-so ever becomes a Christian, he will be one of the best servants God has ever had." The evaluation is based on one's physical appearance, outstanding personality, or perhaps intellectual qualities.

Those are outstanding qualities, but alone they do not make a person an outstanding servant of the Lord.

A man leaves family and friends mystified in his choice of a lifetime companion in marriage. Time proves them right and the man wrong. The result is great disappointment—and sometimes tragedy.

An employer rejoices over his discovery of a person to fill an important position in his corporation. Time proves him wrong in his selection and results in long-term trouble for the business.

It could be a sobering experience for us to take time to think through the results of some mistakes churches, businesses, or individuals have made in wrongly evaluating a person.

For Those Who Live Out the New-Creation Life Another Does the Evaluating

One outstanding feature of the new-creation life is that of being filled with the Spirit of God. When we are filled with the Spirit, He exposes to us the hearts of others.

Some express this understanding of others with "we see people as God sees them" and "we see people with the eyes of Jesus."

Others may be amazed when we express our belief that certain ones are qualified for specific responsibilities when they, from a human point of view, do not appear to be qualified at all.

On the other hand, people will wonder why we do not want to place some seemingly qualified person in an important place of responsibility.

With God evaluating others for us we have freedom from the disappointment and grief resulting from incorrect evaluations.

But there are other blessings in correct evaluations of those living out the new-creation life.

Families, churches, and businesses all live in greater harmony when God evaluates others for them.

There is peace and joy for those in individual relationships created and developed by the Spirit of God.

It is a delight to know we can grow in interpreting God's revelation of the true character and gifts of others.

Chapter 12

Growing in Availability to God

This and the following two chapters develop the same theme—*those living out the new-creation life are extensions of God.*

This chapter develops the statement:

Now all things are of God ... 2 Corinthians 5:18

These are the first words following Paul's new-creation statement in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

From the standpoint of a believer's outer circumstances all things have always been of God. That is why the Scriptures

encourage us to give thanks in all things.

The entire context indicates that this declaration concerns the believer's availability to God. It is the will of God to have access to the lives of His children at all times.

Ralph had been dedicated to God for years. Once he made a commitment to Christ, he never retreated from it. But something happened when he was introduced to—and began to experience—the new-creation life.

Ralph realized that his commitment was not always availability. For the first time he understood that some of the things he did for God in his commitment came from his own thoughts of what he should do rather than believing he was being led by the Holy Spirit.

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Available to God Through Sanctification

The New Testament speaks of believers being sanctified at conversion. In His prayer recorded in John 17, Jesus prayed for His followers to be sanctified.

“Sanctification,” “sanctify,” “saint,” “holy,” and “holiness”

all come from the same root word. The basic meaning of the word is “separation.”

All believers are called “saints.” This means that every believer was set apart to God at the moment of salvation. When we are being sanctified, God is bringing our lives into full harmony with His will for our lives.

When we live out the new-creation life by obeying the five commands of Romans 6:11-13, the result is sanctification. It is availability to God.

When we obey the second, third, fourth, and fifth commands, we are rejecting our point of view about what we should do next and responding to God’s point of view.

It is obvious, then, that the result of obedience to the five commands for experiencing the new-creation life is availability to God.

In the moments we are available to God we are sanctified. In those moments God has full control of our lives.

Read Paul’s words in Romans 6:19b.

... present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

With one exception, this is almost a repeat of the fifth command for living by grace found in Romans 6:13. The one exception is that the ultimate result of continuing to present ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness is “holiness”—availability.

The Blessings of Availability to God

The blessings of availability to God are enormous.

When we can go forward with the assurance that we are in

the will of God, we go forward believing God will use us. We go forward knowing there is meaning to our lives.

The blessing of availability to God is a life of fruitfulness. Fruitfulness results in a deep sense of fulfillment.

Availability to God means others are blessed by God through us.

Availability to God means glory to God through us.

Availability to God means the storing up of gold, silver, and precious stones and not the storing up of wood, hay, and stubble—as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:12.

Availability to God means experiencing the abundant life. Read Romans 6:22:

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

The “everlasting life” mentioned here refers to an unending life and also an abundant life.

Availability and Commitment Are not the Same

We must understand that commitment is not necessarily availability.

When our approach is that of commitment, much of what we do in the Kingdom of God may be the result of what we *think* we should do—*because of our own reasoning*.

When, however, those who are committed to God begin to experience crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, their approach to walking with God is that of availability—not commitment. They move from initiation to response.

We will experience a growing availability by continually obeying the five commands for experiencing our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

We will never arrive at the point of perfectly interpreting the leadership of God. Through growth in experiencing crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, though, we will grow in correctly interpreting God's guidance—and in being available to Him.

Chapter 13

Growing as Ambassadors For Christ

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20

This is the second of three chapters developing the theme “extensions of God” as set forth in the last few verses of 2 Corinthians chapter five.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 Paul writes of the work of God the Father and God the Son bringing the lost to salvation. He also presents the new-creation ones as participants in the work of evangelism—and calls the believers involved in that work “ambassadors for Christ.”

An ambassador is not a decision-maker. He is a representative. He is sent by the sovereign of his own nation to a foreign nation to present the words of the one who sent him.

The Preparation

Without the work of God the Father and God the Son in evangelism there would be no work for the “ambassadors for Christ.”

... God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself ... 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Paul emphasizes this work also in Romans 5:10a:

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son ...

In human relationships we usually think of reconciliation as being between two people having fellowship problems. Yet, there are times when the problem centers in only one of the two.

When the Scriptures speak of man’s reconciliation to God, the problem is always on the side of man. The passage before us makes that fact plain.

When Jesus died on the cross, he took the judgment of man’s sins upon Himself. This was God the Father in Christ reconciling man to Himself.

The love demonstrated by the cross is also a feature of the reconciliation because of its attraction to many.

The Practice

A call to the new-creation life is a call to be an ambassador for Christ. It is a call to participate with God in the ministry of reconciliation.

We may wonder why God uses the concept of reconciliation in this context. Justification is used more often in the New Testament to describe the salvation event. Historically, the new birth and conversion have been used most often to refer to the salvation event.

Why the word “reconciliation in this context?” Why does God not use “born again,” “justification,” or even “baptized into Christ” here.

The answer to that question may be “reconciliation” conveys more of an indication of intimate fellowship than the others. The term is a reminder to those who are ambassadors for Christ that their conversion to Christ was “reconciliation.” It was a call to intimate fellowship with God.

“Reconciliation” is a reminder that as they go forth to represent God, they have the privilege of communion with Him for His directions.

The Gift of the Ministry of Reconciliation

The privilege of participating in the ministry of reconciliation is a gift from God.

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation ... 2 Corinthians 5:18

Often, we think of involvement in the work of evangelism

as a burden to carry. “We don’t enjoy it, but it is something we must do.”

Understanding that the privilege of participating in the work of reconciling men to God is a gift from God will change our perception of involvement in the work of evangelism.

The Gift of the Word of Reconciliation

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:19

What is the difference between the ministry of reconciliation and the word of reconciliation?

The “ministry of reconciliation” is the privilege of participating in the spread of the gospel. The “word of reconciliation” concerns actual words God gives His ambassadors to speak in spreading the message. The statement that follows would support such an understanding of the “word of reconciliation.” In verse 20a Paul writes:

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us ... 2 Corinthians 5:20b.

The words “as though” indicate only an implied speaking of God through the believer. Yet, Greek scholars write that the statement can be translated in the following sense.

Since God is pleading through us.

Translated this way the statement is a firm declaration that God does speak through us. Paul then adds the following:

... we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20c.

One might think Paul is writing this exhortation to the Corinthians. He is not. They are already reconciled. He is stating words God speaks through him to those who have not received Jesus as Lord and Savior.

One can engage in a work of reconciliation without ever experiencing the new-creation life. But one experiencing the new-creation life can be more certain of receiving a “word of reconciliation.”

The Partnership

Not only was God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, but He is *in* and *with* His ambassadors as they share the “words of reconciliation.”

He is also at work in the hearts and lives of those He is reconciling.

The human heart is such that God has to capture it. Man would not come to God on his own nor under the impact of the ambassador alone.

Romans 8:7 exposes the rebellious spirit of the human heart.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

The “carnal mind” can better be translated “the mind of the flesh.” This is a reference to man’s “know-it-all attitude.” Man’s faith in his own wisdom is so deep that he wants no one controlling him—not even God.

In Romans 3:11b Paul writes:

There is none who seeks after God.

Jesus is quoted in John 6:44 as saying:

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him ...

The father does draw to Jesus those He is reconciling to Himself.

Ambassadors for Christ can go forth knowing they are on a divine mission in the strength of divine guidance and divine power to draw men to reconciliation with God.

Growing as ambassadors for Christ is one of the most fulfilling blessings of the new-creation life.

Chapter 14

Growing as The Righteousness of God

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 Paul pens a third way those living out the new-creation life are extensions of God.

*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us,
that we might become the righteousness of God in
Him.*

Believers can become more than righteous. Paul says that we can actually become God's righteousness. Notice the closing words "in Him," meaning "in Jesus." Because we have been immersed into the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, we can become the righteousness of God.

The Meaning of Righteousness

Read the following statement expressing the Father's purpose for the death of Jesus. It was:

... to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Romans 3:26

The word translated "just" is also translated "righteous." The overall meaning of the passage, then, is that it was the righteousness of God that brought judgment on sin. He judged our sins in Jesus that he might justify those who receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Look now at another usage of righteousness in the Scriptures. In Romans 5:18 Paul, again referring to the death of Jesus, writes:

Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

In this usage of the word "righteous" God clearly intends that we understand righteousness to mean Jesus' act of love for all men.

When God's righteousness reigns in us there is a judgment on sin and expressions of His love through us.

Another passage giving vivid indication that the righteousness of God is both judgment on sin and acts of love is First Thessalonians 1:6-7a. The passage reads:

... it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus

is revealed from heaven ...

The judgment on sin begins with sins in our own lives and is tempered with love when judging the sins of others.

Becoming the Righteousness of God

The last of the five commands for living out the new-creation life is:

... [present] your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Stated differently, the passage commands that we give the parts of our bodies to God that He might use them as His instruments of righteousness.

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, Romans 6:16 shows us how to continue to live out these five commands.

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

God knows the power of habit. The word “present” is in a verb tense that means continual action. We become slaves to that which we continue to do. Habits are made over a period of time but once they are established they are difficult to break.

Paul expresses two options for obedience. One is to sin—meaning our “know-it-all attitude.” The other is to obey obedience. We would have expected the options to be to serve sin or

to serve God. Paul surprises us by making the options sin and obedience.

He uses the term “obedience” to make reference to the five commands that he presented in verses 11-13.

Live out the five imperatives for experiencing the new-creation life and, in time, you will become a slave to obeying them. This means that in time living out the new-creation life will be deeply imbedded in our lives through the power of habit.

It is through this continual obedience to the five commands for experiencing the new-creation life that we become “the righteousness of God.”

Imagine that today God lives out His righteousness through us for one minute. Imagine that each day thereafter one minute a day is added to God living out His righteousness through us. In two months God would be living out His righteousness through us for one entire hour a day.

If this rate of growth continued for a year, six hours of our day would be filled with the righteousness of God. If that rate continued for a second year, most of our waking hours would be filled with the righteousness of God.

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Paul intends that we believe if we continue to grow in liv-

ing out the new-creation life, in time we actually become the righteousness of God.

We ourselves produce none of the righteousness. It is because of the increase in receiving the righteousness of God that the Apostle Paul can write:

*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us,
that we might become the righteousness of God in
Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21*

Being the righteousness of God can be a growing reality for all the new-creation ones.

Part IV

Eternity

We have seen that those living out the new-creation life live in two worlds at the same time. In time, we move to the spirit world exclusively. We are strangers and pilgrims on this earth. The day will come when we “go home.”

We will go home either through death or through the return of Christ. If we go home through death, we live in a spirit existence until the return of Christ. If we should live until the return of Christ, we go home in spirit and body. In either case we live in a perfect existence.

But there is yet more. We look forward to the joyfulness of judgment day—and its afterglow.

Chapter 16

Perfection

There are two features to the perfection of the new-creation ones—perfection of the spirit and perfection of the body. If death should come to the new-creation one before the return of Christ there will be a perfection of the spirit. When Jesus returns, the new-creation ones will be perfected in both spirit and body.

Perfected in Spirit at Death

In one of his passages on the theme of the believer living in the spiritual world the author of Hebrews pens a beautiful description of heaven. In the passage he describes those who

are there. He describes those who have gone on to be with the Lord. The passage reads:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ... to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.
Hebrews 12:22-24

Believers who have departed this life and now live continually in that other world are “*the spirits of just men made perfect.*”

This passage does not take into consideration the matter of growth. Whether a person has lived out the new-creation life or not, he is one of the spirits of just men made perfect.

There are passages that at least imply there are distinguishing features to those who have faithfully lived out the new-creation life—even before the resurrection. Here we will only mention the fact because it may not be reality until resurrection day.

In Second Corinthians 4:17-18 Paul writes:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The passage teaches that suffering puts us face-to-face with

God and the result of that communion is an “eternal weight of glory.”

Those who live out the new-creation life will spend much time face-to-face with God even when there is no intense suffering pressing them to Him. The result of that will be glory.

Is this glory on “the spirits of just men made perfect?” It will be evident in the glorified body of the new-creation ones.

Perfected in Body at the Return of Christ

When Adam ate from the wrong tree, the result for him and all those born into his race was a sin nature and a death nature.

Those who live out the new-creation life progressively are being set free from the power of the sin nature. Even though those living out the new-creation life generally have better health and more energy than those who do not live it out, nothing can be done about the death problem.

The question could be asked, “If heaven is the ultimate, why do we need the resurrection?” One answer to that question is *until God gives us a changed body, He has not fully overcome in us the damage Adam brought on us*. Resurrection of our bodies is necessary for total victory for the new creation.

Of course, many of those of the new-creation life will be alive at the return of Christ and will not experience resurrection. They will experience change. Read Paul’s explanation:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trum-

pet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 1 Corinthians 15:50-53.

Notice the two words of the passage describing the perfected body—“incorruption” and “immortality.”

Read 1 Corinthians 15:42-44a for more words describing our perfected bodies:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, 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.

See another description of our perfected bodies in Philippians 3:20-21:

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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.

If the glory that comes on the new-creation ones in this life because of their abiding in the heavenlies does not shine on their spirits before the resurrection, it does radiate from their glorified bodies.

Chapter 17

The Joyfulness of Judgment Day

In His goodness God adds yet another blessing beyond perfection of spirit and body to His new-creation ones—the joyfulness of judgment day—and its afterglow.

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Matthew 16:27

Three words explain the joyfulness of that day for those living out the new-creation life: treasures, crowns, and rewards.

Treasures

It was Jesus in the sermon on the mount who introduced the truth of treasures in heaven when He said:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. Matthew 6:19-20a

The context indicates that the treasures are stored up through a spirit of generosity. A statement from Paul indicates an enormous spirit of generosity in the hearts of those living out the new-creation life. Concerning an offering being taken for the poor Christians at Jerusalem he writes of the giving of the churches of Macedonia:

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 2 Corinthians 8:1-2

It was God's grace that moved the believers of Macedonia to such models of generosity. Live out the new-creation life and receive a spirit of generosity. Receive a spirit of generosity and store up treasures in heaven.

Crowns

The Scriptures speak of several crowns. Paul's statement about an imperishable crown applies to each of them. He writes:

And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.
1 Corinthians 9:25

The crowns mentioned are for specific things.

The Crown of Believers

In two passages Paul writes of believers being his crown. He makes the statement in letters to the churches of Philippi and Thessalonica—two churches he had started.

Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.
Philippians 4:1

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 1 Thessalonians 2:19

The Crown of Righteousness

The crown of righteousness is for those who love the appearing of the Lord.

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8

The Crown of Life

The crown of life is for those who love the Lord and en-

dure temptation— and for those who are faithful into death.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. James 1:12

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10b

The Crown of Glory

The crown of glory is for pastors who serve their churches in a way acceptable to the Lord.

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away 1 Peter 5:1-4

Those living out the new-creation life have done the things that will result in receiving the crowns mentioned in the Scriptures.

Rewards

We will be rewarded for our works.

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Fa-

ther with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Matthew 16:27

Rewards for Works Resulting in Persecution

Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, or the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. Luke 6:22-23

Rewards for Works of Love for Our Enemies

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Luke 6:35-36

Rewards For Works for Fellow Believers

He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward. Matthew 10:41-42

Rewards for Works Led by the Holy Spirit

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's

work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 1 Corinthians 3:12-14

Rewards for Works Done Without Fanfare

Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. Matthew 6:1-4.

The Lord says the same about prayer and fasting.

On judgment day those who have lived out the new-creation life will be on tiptoe with a joyfulness that will extend throughout eternity.

Epilogue

For 23 years I prayed for a return to the *foretaste days*.

Within days after seeing and believing I was already crucified, buried, and resurrected, God so changed me that I realized I had finally found the abundant life Jesus said He had come to give.

I realized as a pastor I had never explained to my members the way to fulfilled living.

From that day I have never ceased sharing the truths of this book. Some have not believed them. Others have. Some have not responded to them. Others have.

If you have always known there was more to the Christian life than you are experiencing, why not choose to live out the new-creation life—that is already yours if you have received Jesus as Lord and Savior?

You will not be disappointed.

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Other books teaching the life of grace are available at a very affordable cost through the offices of David Kuykendall Ministries. We make no profits from the sale of our books. You can order books by mail or phone.

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LIVING BY GRACE: a book of 52 chapters originally written as devotionals for our Web Site. The first eight chapters explain the way of "living by grace." The remaining chapters tell of the blessings for believers who pursue a life of "living by grace."

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