

Living
— FROM THE —
New Life
Within

Living From the New Life Within

Salvation Is More Than Forgiveness

When we think about salvation, it is easy to think primarily about the forgiveness of sins. And forgiveness is certainly a wonderful and essential part of the gospel. But salvation is about much more than having our past forgiven. Salvation is about receiving a completely new life.

WHAT KIND OF LIFE?

When I say new life, I do not simply mean that God wipes clean the past and gives us another opportunity to live better.

- The life we receive is Christ's own life being placed inside of us.
- Paul describes this remarkable reality:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

— Galatians 2:20

This verse is actually the core of what salvation is all about. A death to “the old” and the birth of something totally new.

- Christianity is not merely believing in Jesus and trying to live in a more “Christian” way. It is learning to let Jesus live His life through you.
 - Ultimately, the focus is not even on you having a better life here and now. The greater purpose is that God would be glorified through your life.
- Yes, our sins are forgiven, and this is a wonderful truth. But forgiveness was not the final goal. It was part of a greater work of salvation:
 - **Forgiveness was necessary** because sin had separated us from God.
 - **Through the removal of that barrier**, we could be spiritually born again and receive new life from God.
 - **Having been born again**, we became a holy and acceptable dwelling place for God through His Spirit.
 - **Now God can live in us and express His life through us.**
- This means salvation creates **a new kind of people**—people who are not only able to have fellowship with God, but who are called and empowered to **reflect His image, reveal His character, and represent Him wherever they go.**

A NEW LIFE REQUIRES A NEW WAY OF THINKING

It is easy for Christians to use phrases such as: *“You need to have your identity in Christ.”*

- But learning to actually think and live according to our identity in Christ is a process. The Bible calls this the renewing of the mind.
 - Paul writes:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...

— Romans 12:2

- Notice that transformation is connected to a change in the way we think.
- At the new birth, an immediate spiritual transformation takes place: **we pass from death to life.**
 - This is a very real transformation. Although some may experience it more dramatically than others, the reality of what has taken place spiritually is no less significant.
- **But our thinking does not automatically change overnight.**
 - We still have memories, habits, assumptions, fears, emotional patterns, and ways of thinking that were formed before we understood who we are in Christ.
 - Therefore, our minds must gradually learn to agree with what God has already made true about us in Christ.
- **The new birth happens immediately. The renewing of the mind happens progressively.**
 - You cannot simply come forward in a meeting, have someone lay hands on you, and instantly have every thought pattern renewed.

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The spirit does not need improvement—it needs rebirth.

The soul does not need rebirth—it needs renewal.

And the flesh does not need rehabilitation—it needs the cross.

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GRACE DOES NOT MEAN PASSIVITY

The Christian life is not based upon earning something from God through our works. We are saved by grace.

- **Yet grace does not mean that we become passive.**
 - Paul makes a remarkable statement in Philippians 2:

...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

— Philippians 2:12b-13

- At first, these statements might almost sound contradictory.
 - First he says: “... *work out your own salvation* ...”
 - Then he says: “... *for it is God who works in you* ...”

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

There is no contradiction here. We just need to understand what he is really saying, because this reveals something important about the Christian life.

- We are not working **for** salvation. We are working **out** what God has already worked **in us**.
- God is the source — God gives the life — God supplies the power — God even works in us both the desire and the ability to do His will.
 - **But we respond to what He is doing.**
 - We do not work to **become** new creations in Christ. Our part is to cooperate with God, allowing the new life He has already placed within us to be increasingly expressed through the way we think, live, and act.

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Grace does not make us passive; it empowers our response.

We do not work for salvation — we work out what God has already worked in us.

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SOMETHING IS FINISHED — AND SOMETHING IS STILL BEING RENEWED

There is an aspect of salvation that is entirely **God's work**, and that is the new birth.

- Just as a baby cannot cause itself to be born, **we cannot cause ourselves to be born again**. New birth is something God does in us by His Spirit.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
— John 3:6

- The new birth is God's work in us. That reality cannot be improved by greater effort. You cannot become *more born again* tomorrow than you are today.
 - But there are other aspects of salvation that are progressively expressed in our lives.
 - Our thinking must be renewed.
 - Our desires must increasingly come under the influence of God's truth.
 - Our bodies must be presented to God.
 - Our choices must increasingly reflect the new life we have received.
 - This is why Paul can speak about salvation both as something God has accomplished and something that must be "worked out" in everyday life.

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You cannot become more born again tomorrow than you are today.
The new birth is complete—but the expression of that new life
is still being worked out in the way you think, choose, and live.
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Spirit, Soul, and Body

One helpful biblical framework for understanding this process is to recognize the different dimensions of our human existence.

- When Paul describes the whole person, he speaks of three dimensions: **spirit, soul, and body**.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

— 1 Thessalonians 5:23

THE BODY

The **body** is our point of contact with the physical world around us. Some have called it our "**earth suit**," and I think that is a helpful analogy. The Bible uses a similar picture, describing our body as a **tent**—a temporary dwelling place during our life on earth.

- A tent is not a permanent dwelling.
- A building is permanent — our resurrection body.

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

— 2 Corinthians 5:1

Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

— 2 Peter 1:13-14

- If I traveled into outer space, I would need a space suit that allowed me to survive and function in that environment.
 - In the same way, to live and function in this physical world, I need a physical body — **but my body is not who I am.**
- A tent is something you live **in**. It is not the totality of who you are.
 - Our bodies are important. They belong to God and are to be presented to Him.
 - But Scripture teaches us not to define ourselves merely according to our physical existence.

OUR SOUL

The Bible frequently uses the language of the **soul** in connection with a person's inner life. This includes things such as our:

- thoughts
 - emotions
 - desires
 - decisions
 - memories
 - personality
- Our **mind** is especially important because it shapes how we interpret what we experience and strongly influences **how we respond**.
 - That is why the **renewing of the mind** is such an important part of the Christian life.
 - As our thinking comes into agreement with God's truth, the new life He has placed within us can be expressed more clearly through the way we live.

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Your spirit receives new life in a moment,
but your soul needs to learn to think in agreement
with that life through the renewing of the mind.

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THE SPIRIT

James gives us an important picture of the relationship between the **spirit and the body**. He explains that when the spirit is no longer present, the body is dead:

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.
— James 2:26

- This shows us that the spirit is the essential part of our human existence.
- **Physical life continues as long as the spirit remains in the body; when the spirit departs, the body dies.**
 - In the new birth, our old spirit—separated from God and spiritually dead—is replaced with a **new spirit, born of God and carrying His life within it.**
 - This is where our relationship with God begins.

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
— John 4:23-24

- Our bodies and minds are still undergoing transformation, but the foundation of our new identity **is not found in what we see** when we look at ourselves naturally.

The Christian life begins from the inside out:
God makes your spirit alive, and from that new life
He begins transforming the rest of you.

STOP DEFINING YOURSELF ACCORDING TO THE FLESH

This brings us to an important statement Paul makes immediately before one of the most famous verses about our identity in Christ.

- **Many Christians know 2 Corinthians 5:17, but notice verse 16:**

Therefore, 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.
— 2 Corinthians 5:16

Then Paul explains why:

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

These verses belong together. Paul is teaching us that something so radical has happened through Christ that we must learn to see people from a new perspective.

- And that includes learning to see **ourselves** differently.
- We must stop allowing our natural condition, our past, our failures, our temptations, or our feelings to have the final word concerning our identity.
- **God wants us to see ourselves in light of what He has accomplished in Christ.**

IDENTIFYING WITH THE NEW CREATION

Here we encounter one of the great challenges of Christian growth.

- God tells us that we are new creations. Yet we still have a soul that need renewing.
- We are born again, yet we still live in a body that carries the effects and tendencies of sin.
 - But these tendency are connected to the flesh/body and not part of our new life in Christ.
 - Our responsibility now is to **renew our minds** so that we learn to think and live according to the new life God has placed within us, rather than according to the desires and patterns of the flesh.

WHAT WE EXPERIENCE IS NOT NECESSARILY THE SAME THING AS WHO I AM

It is important to understand that **being tempted is not the same as sinning**. Temptation itself does not mean that you are still a sinner or that the new birth was somehow incomplete.

- Jesus lived a completely holy and sinless life, yet the Bible tells us that **He was tempted just as we are**.
 - This shows that temptation is not sin; sin happens when we yield to temptation rather than resist it.

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,
but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.
— Hebrews 4:15

- A temptation is something I may experience, but it is not necessarily a reflection of who I am.
- An emotion can be real without originating from my true identity.
- A thought can enter my mind without being something I must accept, believe, or agree with.
- An old pattern can still try to influence me without having the authority to control me or demand my obedience.
- Spiritual growth is having our identity increasingly be rooted in **what God says is true about us in Christ**, rather than in every thought, feeling, temptation, or old pattern we experience.

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Spiritual maturity begins when you stop interpreting
your identity through every passing thought or feeling,
—and start seeing yourself through the finished work of Christ.
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ROMANS 6 — THE FOUNDATION FOR OUR FREEDOM

Romans 6 is one of the most important passages for understanding this.

- Paul writes:

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 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. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.
— Romans 6:5-12

There are at least 8 powerful truths in this passage

1. Our old man was crucified with Christ.

- Paul describes this as an accomplished fact. *"Our old man **was crucified** with Him..."*.
- Our old existence under sin's dominion was brought to an end through the cross with Christ.
- Christianity does not begin with trying to repair the old man. It begins with death and resurrection.

2. Sin's dominion has been broken.

- Paul says the purpose was: *"...that the body of sin might be done away with..."*.
- This does not mean that Christians can no longer experience temptation.
 - ✦ If temptation had disappeared, Paul would have no reason to tell believers not to allow sin to reign.
- Rather, **sin is no longer our rightful master**. Its dominion has been broken.

3. We are no longer slaves of sin.

- Before Christ, sin was our master. But Paul says: “...that we should no longer be slaves of sin”.
- The relationship has changed. Sin may still issue commands. But we are no longer obligated to obey them.
- The voice of the old master may still be heard, but the old master no longer owns us.

4. We participate in Christ’s resurrection life.

- We did not merely die with Christ. We also live with Him.
- The gospel therefore contains both: “**death to the old**” and “**life in the new**”.
- Christianity is not a life in which every sinful desire has been removed. It is a life in which “*the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead*” lives in us and empowers us to no longer live as slaves to our old master.
- ✦ We may still feel the pull of the flesh, but **we are no longer under its dominion**.

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 [...] 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.

— Romans 8:11+13

5. Christ’s victory is complete and final.

- Jesus “...died to sin once for all...”. He will never need to die again.
- **The foundation of our freedom is therefore not our own ability to defeat sin.** Our freedom rests upon Christ’s completed victory.

6. Our new life has a new direction.

- Paul says: “...the life that He lives, He lives to God.”
- Salvation does not merely give us something to be delivered from. It gives us Someone to live for. We are alive to God.

7. We must “reckon” ourselves dead to sin.

- This is where the renewing of the mind becomes extremely practical.
- Paul says: “Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”
- To “reckon” does not mean pretending something is true when it is not. It means **counting as true what God says is true**.
- ✦ God says that I died with Christ. Therefore, I learn to think from that reality.
- ✦ God says that I am alive to Him. Therefore, I learn to see myself from that reality.
- ✦ God says sin is no longer my master. Therefore, I learn to respond to temptation from that reality.

8. We must not allow sin to rule our choices.

- Then Paul says: “*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body...*”
- Notice the order.
 - Paul does not say: “**Defeat sin so that one day you can become free.**”
 - He teaches: “**Because you died with Christ and sin’s dominion has been broken, do not allow sin to reign.**”
- We are not fighting **for** victory. We are learning to stand firm in the victory Christ already won.

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Sin may still speak, tempt, and pull—but it no longer owns you.

In Christ, the old master has lost its right to rule.

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WALKING IN A WORK THAT IS ALREADY FINISHED

This changes the way we understand the renewing of the mind. When we renew our minds, we are **not improving the new birth**.

- We are not gradually becoming born again.
- We are not slowly turning ourselves into new creations.
- The new birth is already a reality.
- Now we are teaching our minds—our “control center”—to operate according to the new life God has given us rather than according to the old patterns that previously governed us.
- Think about as installing a completely new operating system while still having old habits about how you use the computer.
 - The new system may already be installed, but you still have to learn how to operate according to the new reality.
 - In a similar way: Our Christian growth is not an attempt to create the new life. It is learning to live from the new life we have already received.

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The Christian life is not a journey of trying to become
someone new, but of learning to think, live, and respond
from the new life God has already placed within us through Christ.

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