

A dense field of bright yellow tulips with green stems and leaves, filling the entire background of the page.

Life in the Son

A Journal of Grace and the In-Christ Message

Life in the Son

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Christ in you, the Hope of Glory*

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EDITORIAL

I have just finished writing a book called *The World is a Schoolhouse*. Years ago the Holy Spirit directed me to some hard, clear answers for questions that stem from very hard times. Needless to say, the answers I received from the Holy Spirit caused me to want to blame the world for my troubles rather than understand what the Spirit was telling me. The Holy Spirit opened up to me more about the world we live in than I had ever conceived. When we read the story of Creation in Genesis, we are told only a part of what really happened when God created the heavens and the earth. What we see there is the fact that God is the Creator and mankind will have to accept that fact or never have any answers to creation. The evolutionists have never come up with a better plan than the Scriptures give, but they probably will argue till the end of time.

What Genesis gives us is who created the world, and this is important; but there is still the question as to why there is a Creation in the first place. To get this

answer you have to go the Apostle Paul. A study of Colossians 1 gives the answer. The first thing you have to accept to understand Paul's message on Creation is that those who can understand the truth concerning Christ's part in Creation must be translated into the kingdom of His Son (Col. 1:13). This is the prerequisite for knowing anything that has to do with creation. This translation simply means a human has been redeemed, re-birthed into God's family and has a wisdom working in him that is necessary to understand Creation and why there is a world (1 Cor. 2:6-10).

The "why of creation" is locked up in the person of Christ. I am told that most evolutionists are athiests, or infidels. This means they do not believe in Christ as the answer to life and Creation. As such they will never have the wisdom to know the things concerning Creation and life. When Paul says there is a special wisdom necessary to know the things that have to do with God, the Creator, and Christ, the life of the human, he is not talking about religion. He is talk-

ing about the scientific facts that must be adhered to to know the answer to Creation and life. This is a special wisdom that cannot be found in human study, or universities, or the study of man-made science. It is clear that aside from Christ as Savior, science will never know and understand how the world was created; and most of all, it will never know why.

The world was created by God for Jesus Christ. This may seem too simple for some folk to understand, but the world came into existence so that God, the Father, would have a place to train a group of people He would birth Himself. This birthing was the keystone of His plan. Those He re-birthed would have another life put in them (Col. 1:27), the Christ-life and this life would be so different to those He birthed that a special place would be prepared to train them. Look in Colossians 1 at the definite things those persons with Christ in them needed to know.

1. Verse 16 says that everything that is created

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WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR OUR ETERNAL SALVATION? PART 2

By Richard D. Cassidy

Taken from Christ-life 2005 Ridgecrest Camp Meeting

Seems to me that the Apostle Paul grew in his revelation knowledge of Christ each time he either spoke of Him or wrote of Him, for that growth is evident in his epistles. We should experience the same sort of growth knowledge each time we have occasion to speak of Christ, to write of Christ or to learn of Christ. Unique to each of us who is in Christ is the story we are learning to tell. At the same time, we are growing in phenomenal knowledge every time we tell it. But I fear many testimonies are as old as the person is in their salvation experience. Such inactivity in the testimony-telling will undoubtedly stagnate, and many will forfeit those sharing opportunities that the Lord is gracious to give to each of us in our life. It is true that not all of us possess the skills, nor the intellect, to tell the Jesus story as say Warren or Robbie Litzman, and that's just fine, for neither you nor I have any business whatsoever telling their story, or any one else's story for that matter.

Each of us yearns to learn, to gain a deepening knowledge of this Christ, who generously and graciously lives in us, in order that we have more of an appreciation for His Word and the Holy Spirit's work and His gentle prodding of our own intellect. We hope to absorb what we are capable of learning and to become a wellspring of knowledge for others to drink from.

We are on a learning journey of knowledge which is taking us beyond that which we once pondered as the ultimate truth to that phenomenal awakening that says there is more, oh so much more than has been permitted for mere man to know, but is yet knowable. Don't get the idea that because we listen to the teaching of certain teachers, we can become as those who speak, for we cannot. It is indeed possible, indeed profitable, for us to learn everything that Warren knows, but that does not imply that we will be as Warren, or as Richard or Robbie or anyone else who

speaks, because we are not that person. You and I will put this knowledge to work in us through the mighty and mysterious working of Christ as we are and not as some one else. So just be who you are and bathe luxuriously in the knowledge that is being revealed to you, but only as you; it is then that knowledge will have its root and will then bear fruit. Amen?

Is all of what I am saying necessary, really required, for our salvation?

The Image of the Invisible God

Paul could say some of the most intriguing thoughts right in the middle of an already intriguing thought and this is what he did without even pausing for a breath when he said: "*Who [Christ] is the image of the invisible God*" (Col. 1:15). Listen closely: How is it possible to have an image of something that is invisible? Scholars for centuries have continued to search out the meaning of this thought, and are no closer to understanding it than they were when they

first began their inquiry. Some have literally tried to reconstruct the Greek syntax of the sentence, by adding words that tend to make clearer what Paul was saying: for example, putting the word *logos* in place of the word *eikon* which is translated “image.” While this only satisfies the Greek scholars, it disturbs those who work from the Hebrew, who then insert a co-eternal one with God, and who was present with God when He created the world. *Wisdom* in the Hebrew was the image of God in Creation and so it could have been that Paul had this thought flowing from his mind. However, that’s not the end of it, for there is yet another scholarly group that works from a much simpler expression of Hebrew creation: God created everything out of nothing and the ultimate act of His creativeness was man. Remember how Moses states it in Genesis 1:26–27? “*So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him...*” This passage suggests that in the beginning God was as God is now, invisible, yet out of that unseen and unknown substance He created man in the likeness of Himself. Could it be then that this is Paul’s thought about Christ—that He is this image of the invisible God? I’ll leave you to ponder that on your own; well, maybe not quite that abruptly, so

let me give you an accompanying thought, okay? We all have a physical image of Christ in our minds, whether it is there unreliably or without any biblical validation. We have seen images of what Christ looked like out of the minds of artists who paint or sculpt of wood, stone and metal, etc., right? So then, when you either go to meet Christ through natural death, or by the rapture, will He be as you pictured Him all your life, or will He be of some other appearance? In other words, has Jesus always looked like Jesus, both here on the earth and in eternity past? Did Jesus come to earth as Jesus of Nazareth precisely as He was as Jesus of Eternity? I know that these questions are most likely an exercise in futility because we cannot know absolutely for certain precisely what our precious Lord looks like any more than we can know for certain precisely what we are going to look like in eternity. For me, well, I’m just fine with that for I take comfort in John’s thought when he wrote to the saints in his aging times about this very matter:

“*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and doth not yet appeared what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3:2).

Out of all this thinking, and indeed, learning, we

can conclude a powerful truth, revolving around the word *image* or *icon*. An icon was a representation, or reproduction with a precise likeness. It was a portrait of a person’s likeness or an image of a sovereign or hero on a coin. Paul says Jesus Christ was precisely that, a representation of God the Creator-Father. But there is more to it than that, a great deal more! The word *icon* also means manifestation, which means to make real more than being in the likeness of God, as are all created persons. Jesus was God Himself in human incarnation. The Colossians knew that Paul was encountering the Gnostic philosophy that Christ was one expression among many emanations from God, or that He was not truly and fully human. Paul made it clear: in the body of one human, Jesus of Nazareth, God was incarnated. How much this says to those of our day and of every age who fallaciously talk about the many roads that lead to God—Christ being one way, and not the only way.

There has been, for nearly fifty years now, a widespread and popular effort within Christianity to diminish the importance of dogma, or teaching with the contention being that doctrine is irrelevant to the life and times of the average person. The problem with this sort of thinking is not found at

(NECESSARY—CONT. ON P. 20)

THE ULTIMATE INTENTION

By Warren Litzman

My thoughts have always gone in a direction of ‘Why God?’ when it came to the impossible circumstances and situations of life. I wanted to know why God let certain things happen, and why did He not do something about it. He is God Almighty, the great Creator, the loving heavenly Father, and it seems He could do something if He wanted to. I know these are thoughts that many people have. In my search to know God, I was stopped many times at the point of saying, Why don’t you do something, God. You are the only help I have. In my overwhelmed condition, waiting on God to do something, the Holy Spirit, my teacher, would always say, You have much more to learn; just be patient. While this was a help just to hear from the Holy Spirit, my need was still not met; but as time continued, something did happen that was important. What the Holy Spirit began to teach me about God became more important than the answer to my need.

You have heard it so many times, especially from others who were not in your circumstance, that the Lord is just trying to teach you something. This seemed to bring little comfort, but was, in fact, a great truth. It seems the Holy Spirit does His best work when the old C&S gang (circumstances and situations) come at us. I know that I was often confused at God’s dealing with me, but I came to a day when things began to straighten out in my mind. That day was when the Holy Spirit began to reveal Christ who lived in me. On that day, I entered into a new life, a life I had never heard of before, even though I had been very successful in the Christian ministry for over thirteen years.

It all started with the Holy Spirit telling me that God had an overall intention that was working in His eternal plan; and if I knew His eternal plan, I would see how I fit into it. There would be an answer for my life’s problems, and His intention for me would be made known. It was at this period the Spirit led

me to a book entitled *Ultimate Intention*, written by Devern Fromke. The book opened my understanding to what the Spirit was trying to teach me. God had an ultimate plan. He had a definite intention. Nothing was wrong with the world; it was still in His control. God was sane; humanity was haywire. I read this book over forty years ago, and it began a journey into the mind of Christ I never dreamt existed.

God does have an ultimate intention. He is doing His work among humans according to His plan. The great thrill of being a Christian is the work of our teacher, the Holy Spirit, unfolding God’s plan as we search for His fullness, which centers in His Son, Jesus Christ. As we come to know Christ in His fullness, the more we will know God’s intention for us and for the world. This search to know Christ is most often complicated by religious people who think they have discovered a way to live that is contrary to the Father’s plan.

Be assured; the Father has a plan, and it is usually not known by anyone but the Holy Spirit, who is every believer's teacher.

The search for God's ultimate intention usually has its greatest moments when we are battling the C&S gang. It is when everything seems wrong that the Holy Spirit does His greatest work in our minds. It is in our mind where we have the problems of 'why God.' One of the first things the Holy Spirit wants to teach us is that it was not in God's plan that His children, birthed by Him, should have such a hard time living in this world that He created. The way we treat the bad times we have in life, and the way we treat sickness and death, and the way we treat one another, has come from teachers that so often know nothing of God's intention for children He has personally birthed. Actually, false teachers in the world and religion are the ones that have denied humanity the gospel of what God's intention really is. Too often these ignorant teachers have created problems for humanity by their own anti-God ideas, not knowing what God's intention really is for humanity. It is understandable that if those who teach ignore God's Word or never listen to the Holy Spirit and deny Christ's rightful place in the human's life, the result will be multi-

tudes of religious people who live and die without ever knowing what God is doing or what His intention was for them.

Is it possible humans are living the wrong life? If it was not God's intention that we live with all the problems we now have, then how should we be living? Even born-again Christians live little or no difference from the rest of the world. Is it God's fault, or is there some human answer? Many in Christianity believe that when Jesus came the first time to the earth He spent time teaching people how to live. All of His instruction would have been perfect, but it did not fit humanity as it was. Humanity had a sin-nature that came from Adam and it did not matter how much the human wanted to live a new life, as Jesus of Nazareth taught, His teachings and the old sin-nature in the human were incompatible. No matter how much a person wanted to live the message Jesus taught, they fell short. An important part of Jesus' message was His coming death on the cross. His death would cover a strategic aspect of how a human could have the kind of life the Father intended, a life that would fit the human and a life that would fit into this world. This new life for the human would mean the total giving up of the old life that was so unsuccessful. This is the

shrewd thing the Father did at the Cross. He killed out the old life, called the "old man" in the Scriptures, so that there would be no problem moving into a new existence. But believe it or not, most humans who accepted Christ's death for their salvation merely wanted to clean up their old life and had little or no intention of having a whole new life. In fact, most did not even realize there was a whole new life available. So most Christians have spent a lifetime in religion cleaning up their old life. But this was never as good as what God had planned for humans. His intention for humans was still lacking. There was still more the Father must accomplish before He could have a new humanity.

What did the Father really want? Looking around at most human beings, you would think there is not a single plan at work in humans as a whole. They are all so different, not only different outwardly but different in spirit and soul. This was their original creation and God's intention that they all be different. Why? Certainly the Father had a plan from the start, and the best way for us to understand this is to look at who He is.

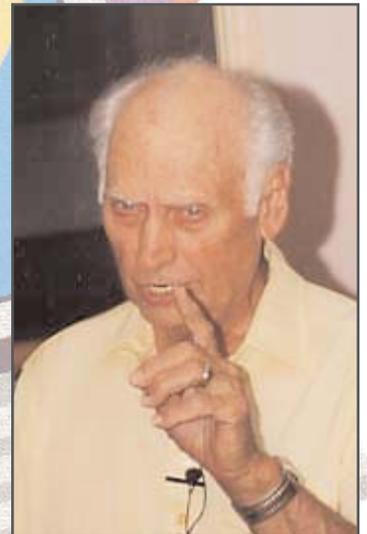
What would be the most perfect definition for God, our Father? The Scriptures are plain on this point.

(ULTIMATE-CONT. ON P. 22)

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ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS OVERLOOKED AS A CHRISTIAN MISSION FIELD

By Keith Walters

Because of the apparent shift in today's Alcoholics Anonymous to the definition of God as anything but Jesus Christ (the God of the Bible), most of Christianity views this movement as secular, cultish and anything but what its founding fathers really believed. I can only point to this false belief as being the result of ignorance (lacking facts). The early history of the A.A. movement has been all but forgotten, avoided and even criticized by many. It would be unmistakably clear to anyone who would take the time to research and study A.A.'s history that this movement was spawned by God's word (especially, *Sermon on the Mount*, 1 Cor. 13 and the entire book of James).

Back in 1939, A.A. boasted of a 75-93 percent success rate. Today this same movement can only muster up a 3-7 percent success rate. Without going into great detail, it is safe to say A.A. itself has denied, rejected and scoffed at the very God that inspired it. This

resulted in the decline of its effectiveness as well as many forms of spiritual deception having a free-for-all in their meeting halls; sad but true. Most of today's A.A. members will reject this analogy simply from their own unadmitted fear, ignorance and pride.

There are more than 200,000 groups meeting everyday all around the world. On any given day, worldwide, there are probably over 20,000 newcomers attending these gatherings looking for the solution to their addictions as well as other life problems (This estimate does not factor in all those who have chosen one of the other 200 self-help type groups available). "The program" requires one to work 12 steps, and step 3 will surely be encountered. Step 3: "Made a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God, as we understand Him." After years of working with addicts it has been made crystal clear to me that because of this step these newcomers are, at this point, ready to hear God's

calling. The problem is, today there isn't anyone there to help bring these "babes" to the Truth (Gal. 2:20). Do you see the problem? I believe it is my (our) duty to be there armed with the facts about A.A.'s early history, supporting Scripture and knowledge of the "basic text" of A.A. which precisely defines "The Program." Side note: the phrase "God as we understand Him" meant as much of the God of the Bible as we understood. Not make up your own god.

Working with many people has shown me one powerful truth, which is: You cannot bring most addicts to believe in Christ or to sobriety by throwing religion their way, i.e. preaching, warning of sin, judgment, go to church, etc. On the other hand, I have found that when using the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous as a guide, you cannot only enter the halls of A.A. undetected, but nine out of ten who are willing, honest and open-minded find Christ every time. It is Christ who then brings the remaining steps to life.

Today's A.A., unlike the original movement of 1939, is currently an untapped population made up of more than 2 million hungry hearts dying to find our Savior as their life. Christianity needs to be educated and needs to enter into the battle within the self-help movement. On the other hand, Christianity (religion) does not need to re-write A.A.'s manual or the powerful 12 Steps. This is a huge mistake currently being made. By doing this, organized religion shows total disregard for the founding fathers and their biblical influences. Education is the answer.

Now, for an even deeper question: Does the Christ-life message fit into the teachings of the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous (or vice-versa)? I can only speak from my experience, having used A.A.'s Big Book for many years to present Paul's message. As you probably already know, it's not the book itself, rather who's presenting the book. Safe to say, many a man has used the Bible to teach and has thoroughly missed the mystery, which is "*Christ in you, the hope of Glory.*"

So, with the understanding that Christ is my only life, I have found He, by me, interprets the Big Book's message and delivers it to the suffering addict without deep religious overtones. Addicts do not like religion; but,

unlike a lot of people who come into this message, they haven't been beaten up by the constant deluge of law, as found in most churches today. No, they have been beaten up by drugs and alcohol and have few signs of pre-conceived religious dogma. I have found them to be particularly receptive to the message of "*the new creation race*" (2 Cor. 5:17).

It has been a wonderful experience to see how the Holy Spirit has pointed only to Christ during the reading of the basic text with each suffering addict. I have witnessed countless men's hearts light up when they realize a way out of their addiction. I have seen an even deeper joy and relief when they see that there is truly a new life within them (John 17). Some say, "Wow! you mean Christ will live His life in me as me?"

In spirit, you become a whole new person. The living God will reside within your members and be Himself, by you, to the whole world. This "*new creation,*" (2 Cor. 5:17) which was brought to pass before the foundation of the earth (Eph. 1:4-5) will forever be a source of living water. He is the only true life-giving fountain for all those who thirst. Amazing, isn't it? (See John 7:38.)

Allow me to quote some of the writings found in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous which points the way to the Creator

residing within a human being. Read these quotes carefully:

"There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. Step 3. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; (John 15:5) that without Him I was lost. Step 1. I ruthlessly faced my sins (James 5:16) and became willing to have my new-found Friend (John 15:15) take them away root and branch. Step 2 (1 John 1:9) I have not had a drink since" (*Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 13, par. 2, "Bill's Story").

This quote is filled with Scriptural overtones. The authors are basically rephrasing John 3:16. Bill W., one of A.A.'s founders, in this statement is relating to the reader how he did the sinners prayer, as well as, working the first three steps.

"Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid. It meant the destruction of self-centeredness. I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all" (*Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 14, par. 1, "Bill's Story").

The destruction of self-centeredness, (John 12-24) we know, happens with the exchanged Spirit moving into us at the re-birthing. Satan is the author of the

self-for-self life (self-centeredness). The destruction of him (Satan) took place before the foundation of the world, when the Father slew His Son. Of course, the price that has to be paid is the dying to self. Yes? We do that simply by confessing the need of a Savior and asking Christ to come live His life in and through us (John 17). That's when the fun begins. For the first time in our lives we have a choice, through faith, not to sin. We become dead to sin (Rom. 6:5-7). Much, much more could be said about this death to sin, but maybe later.

"The great fact is just this, and nothing less: We have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous" (*Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 25, par. 2, "There is a Solution"; see John 17).

This quote confirms where God is located and that He actually lives there. He dwells and has His being right there in our hearts. We also know, because of this, the Spirit of Christ expresses Himself in the believer. He who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with the Lord. The

Holy Spirit begins to reveal this new life within us, which leads ultimately to the "*renewing of the mind*" (Rom. 12:2). You can easily see how change begins to occur, can't you? My attitude began to totally shift as Christ was allowed, through belief, to begin a new work in me, which revolutionized my whole way of thinking and seeing.

"When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?" (*Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 53, par. 2, "We Agnostics"; see Col. 3:9-11).

We certainly don't see any grey area here, do we? "We had to fearlessly face." This is a place in my own life that I have praised God for countless times. It brought me to the point of having no other choice but Him. Christ is all in all (1 Cor. 2:2; Col. 3:9-11). All things were created by Him and for Him, aside from Him there is no other and in Him all things hold together (Col. 1:16-17). Experience has repeatedly shown me that addicts love black and white terms. They respond very well when the one helping them eliminates any wiggle room. You can easily see how this quote hits the nail right on the head.

"When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all-powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow, or the hereafter. We were reborn" (*Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 63, par. 1, "How it Works").

Wow, did I read that right? Did the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous just use the re-birthing term? Yes, it did! That's what makes reading this to addicts so enjoyable for me. You see, all I have to do is recite A.A.'s own instruction manual and with the quickening of the Holy Spirit, I find it quite simple to begin explaining our Christ-life message (Gal. 1:12). Do you see? It talks about the birthing, and all there is left to do is explain what that really means. The birthing. The very seed of God was put into the Spirit-center of the

new believer to live His life through the body and soul of man. The Christ-life message flows spontaneously out of you to the suffering addict and they love it.

Remember, these quotes come straight from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. Granted, there are some vestiges of works, but we understand the Holy Spirit will be faithful to reveal Christ is the only true worker (John 16:13). Christ becomes the doer, rather than Satan.

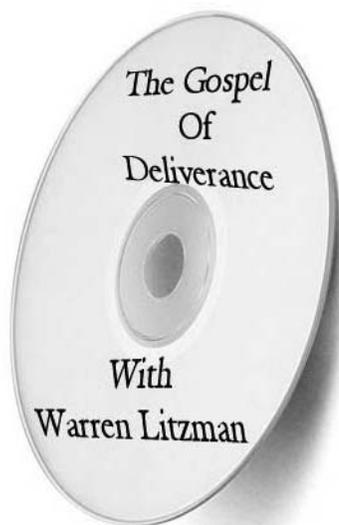
This brings me to the final point of this article; and a very critical point it is. When we hear that it

wasn't us doing the evil deeds, rather Satan using our members, (Eph. 2:1-3) this promotes and allows us to begin losing all fear, shame and guilt. You see, we addicts usually have done some pretty terrible things in our past while trying to stay ahead of withdrawal. All along we were convinced it was us doing these evil deeds; consequently, not only did we use drugs and alcohol to get high, but we also continued to use in order to further block out all the shame and guilt that would pile up day by day. Life became a vicious circle until the time came when

we got so worn out, discouraged and depressed (hopeless) that we were ready to do anything (including suicide) to stop the cycle. It is then that we became willing to hear the Christ-life message. Once again, the sad thing here is, no one is there to convey the total truth to us, which is the person of Jesus Christ within the believer living His life. Instead, we are constantly inundated with all these "little tin gods" having no power, no truth and the result being no real escape, no lasting recovery, no freedom, no peace and no rest. Sad, isn't it? †

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR IS HERE

By Alice Scott-Ferguson

By the time you read this, the echoes of the greeting “Happy New Year” will be fading into the distance, hand in hand with the dismantled Christmas lights. At the time of writing, it is January and the words are still ringing out as we wish, and are wished, the best of everything this year—especially if the last one was less than serendipitous.

The beginning of a new year always starts out with fresh resolutions, a determination to rebuild the cracking and crumbling conditions of our lives and with a fervent hope that it be a happy one. Countries and cultures mark the change of the calendar with different ceremonies and, in Scotland, the first person to enter the house after the stroke of midnight is required to be tall, dark and handsome in order to grace the year with the hope of happiness. Needless to say, Scottish folks do not have a corner on happiness even if their “first footer” did possess all the required attributes.

Beyond the Words

The persistent use of the word *happy* to describe a new year or to dictate the state of our lives, begs for a closer examination. The concept of happiness as a birthright was not unique to Thomas Jefferson. It was a common theme in both the French Revolution and during the Age of Enlightenment. However, the framers of the Constitution must have suspected that even the establishment of a free and vibrant land of equality and opportunity could only hold out the pursuit, not the possession of happiness. One of my mentors, the psychiatrist Dr. William Glasser, declares that any emotion has but a brief shelf life and that anger, sadness or happiness lose their purity and morph into something else after 15 minutes. Beyond a quarter of an hour, anger is already twinned with resentment, sadness has become morbidity and happiness is eclipsed by shadows of fear and dread.

Christians have classically chosen to use the

word *joy* as a substitute for happiness, saying that the former connotes a deeper sense of well-being that has its roots in the reality of the unseen and can hold its own when the going gets tough. The word in its noun form—*happiness*—means, according to Webster’s Book of Synonyms, “pleasure, delight, gladness, contentment, joy, satisfaction.” Those are words that we can more readily relate to because they are the vocabulary of those who have substituted the pursuit of a will o’ the wisp for the permanent state of equilibrium that is unaffected by circumstances.

We are wired for happiness. Our mind and body and emotions are in a constant state of striving for equilibrium and homeostasis, but it is imperative to differentiate between the imposter called false happiness that would pose as the solution to the dissonance, and true happiness that is attainable and which alone can settle and quiet our restless souls.

What It Is Not

The life and satisfaction of the flesh is forever trying to snuff out the life and expression of the Spirit. As Thomas Keating so accurately said, “We seek substitutes for the happiness for which we are predestined but which we do not know how to find.” If we have been endowed with a western mind-set, and especially the American attitude of entitlement to happiness, we have to be even more aware of the conflict and the tendency to define *happiness* as the absence of adversity. The mores of the times teach us to acquire things, achieve status and avoid pain.

The endless acquisition of “things” whether for home, hobby or recreation, really means buying, buying, buying—a condition that has come to be known as conspicuous consumption. Someone has said that shopping has become—for some among us—a second career! Having quite forgotten the words of Jesus echoing down the corridors of time when he said “A man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15), we mistakenly think that the accumulation of material goods will quell the uneasiness and assuage the angst of life. And let’s be honest, that little kick and spurt of joy we get when we make that coveted item ours—when it rides home with us in the back of the car—is undeniably pleasurable.

Yet, next morning, the shiny new acquisition already looks jaded and the empty space in our heart that we thought we had filled yesterday has gaped open and demands filling again. Indulge this appetite to excess and it becomes addictive: indulge it beyond our means to pay and we run into debt. What a sting is in the tail of this particular pursuit of happiness.

We then figure that personal achievement and accomplishment will perhaps put an end to our craving for contentment. We accumulate credentials, kudos and influence hoping that those will bring us happiness. They do indeed bring some satisfaction and it is right to maximize the use of our talents, but the numbers are legion of those who have attained to some of the highest pinnacles of prestige and still feel empty in the deepest recesses of their souls. Again the euphoria is transient and more words from the Master come to mind. “*What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*” (Matt. 16:26)

Collecting a bevy of beautiful people for friends, turning out super kids who show-case our prestige as parents or changing partners in the quest for gratification are perhaps the most tragically unfulfilling of all the chases. Cultivating connections that enhance our career at the expense of nurturing

real friendships leaves us sad and lonely. Hankering after a different spouse instead of cherishing the one we are with, proves to be a seedbed of discontent and strife. Pining over the bewildering choices made by our children that have seemingly ruined their chances in life, does nothing to ensure either their happiness or ours.

Even electing to undergo cosmetic surgery or submitting to Botox treatment to lift and plump our sagging flesh does not bring the lasting sense of joy we seek. Skin has a way of continuing to head south, if you haven’t already noticed. Shedding the pounds, crunching on lettuce or sweating it out at the gym will do little to install a permanent sense of bliss either. Although good health habits are commendable and make for a more productive lifestyle, we daren’t hang our hope of true happiness—or even longevity—on these ephemeral elements.

What Does the Real Thing Look Like?

It looks like craziness to the natural mind. What is this? People rejoicing when they suffer, giving thanks in all kinds of tribulations and persevering with joy when circumstances appear unbearable. It does not look like either a pursuit or a chase, but a composed, serene state of being rooted in the present moment. It is neither cran-

ing into the future for relief nor casting a backward glance out the rear view mirror of the journey wishing the road had taken some different turns

This is the real thing. This is the attainable happiness that eludes us in all our other efforts. This is the Rest of God—the Life in the Son. We were created to be completed in Christ, to be established in union with the Triune God, our Father; and only in that position—and in the awareness of it—are we truly happy. We need not substitute more ‘spiritual’ words to describe our condition. We can take back the territory of the land called happiness, for the Scriptures say “*Happy are the people whose God is the Lord.*” (Prov. 16:20).

Although we know that ultimate shadow-free living still lies in the distant destination of heaven, it is time we learned to live out our legacy in the here and

now as well. When God tells us to cast all our anxieties and cares on Him, then we can live free from the kind of concern that propels us to seek relief in poor substitutes. As we remember that he has promised to provide all our needs and never leave or forsake us, then we have no need to grab at the temporal and transitory offerings of the world system. Every need has been designed to be met in Christ Jesus—our daily bread, our home, our friends, our position and our purpose.

True happiness looks like someone standing open and vulnerable, willing to renounce the right to their own natural life. This life is ready to be poured out for others, so unlike the self-seeking that pursues the specter of personal gain. In the marvelous movie *The End of the Spear*—which tells the story of five missionaries who were killed by

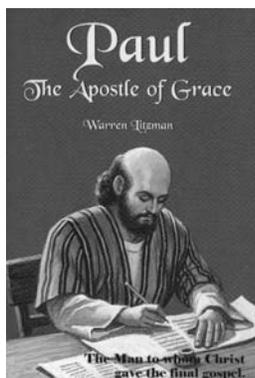
Waorani tribesman in the jungle of Ecuador—the son of one of the martyred missionaries, Steve Saint, reflects how people talk a lot about what the families lost, but little about what they gained. At the close of the account, he goes on to say, “My father’s life was not taken from him, he gave it.”

Genuine happiness is always in giving rather than receiving. And the more aware we become of our unity with Christ, the more all of our dearest wishes, hopes and dreams will be granted because our wills have become one with His and we know, as Paul writes,

“All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.” (Rom. 8:28).

We can trust our Father God completely no matter the turmoil, the anguish or the pain, so here’s to a truly happy new year! †

Paul: The Apostle of Grace



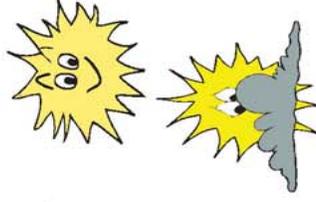
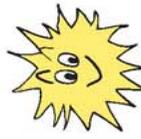
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The Seed – John 12:24

We are planted together with Christ in the likeness of His death, burial and resurrection. The seed must die to bring forth life. By the death of Christ, the seed, God brings forth life. The germ in the seed is Christ, and the husk is our flesh.

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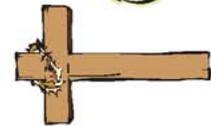
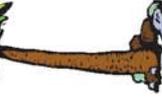
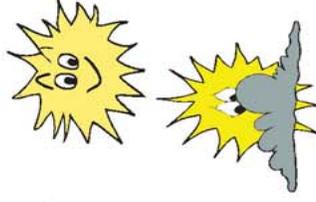


3 Things in the Seed

1. *Christ Life:*
1 John 5:12
2. *Christ Spirit:*
Romans 8:9
3. *Christ Nature:*
2 Peter 1:4

We have to die to self to be alive to Christ.

Troubles and Trials



There is loneliness and the fear of being forgotten in death and being planted.

The C & S and T & T are what break down the husk, the flesh, so that life, Christ, can come forth.

Locked into every seed is the fruit, what you bear.

The fruit hangs on the branch, but the branch cannot produce the fruit, the fruit is produced by the seed, Christ in you.

THE BIRTHING AND SALVATION

By Warren Litzman

The security of the re-birthed believer is revealed in a well-defined body of Scripture, the interpretation of which is not subject to question as to its exact meaning, or to the fact that it refers only to salvation. If the plain teaching of the Word of God is taken to be the final statement of truth, the subject is not even worthy of debate. My purpose here is to give undivided attention to the positive words of certainty regarding the divine keeping guaranteed in the Word to every re-birthed child of God. Complete exposition of this extensive body of Scripture would be impossible within the limits of this writing. It would entail all of the Apostle Paul's writings, plus certain writings from John and Peter. According to God's Word, the truly birthed child of God is secure in the Father's keeping for at least several important reasons that should be learned.

The Purpose, Power And Present Attitude Of God the Father

1. The Purpose of God

The Scriptural revelation unfolds the eternal past, the present order in time, and the eternal future. The re-birthed one is closely related to all these. From the beginning he was in the thought and purpose of God, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). He is now living in the day of grace, and the eternity to come is made glorious by the sure realization of the plan of God for him.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:29-30).

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

These passages sweep through the whole of eternity. They reveal the

Father's divine purpose in the dateless past and reach on to its realization in the eternity to come. This is all done without reference to anything a human could do about his own condition. Still another passage, related only to the ages to come, reveals that there will be a great display of the grace of God to all created beings.

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in 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 through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6-7).

This means a solemn question must confront every thoughtful person as to whether the heavenly Father can realize His eternal purpose in Christ, or is He baffled and uncertain in the presence of His own children whom He has rebirthed and who are the object of His own creative power? Will He speak of those whom He has birthed by His own seed, Christ, as having no eternal standing



by that seed? Will eternal life, given at salvation, be contingent on the believer or on the seed? To these questions the Scriptures give clear and certain answers.

2. The Power of God

God has not only revealed Himself as Creator and Lord of all, but it has pleased Him to give the most minute and exact assurance of His ability to do for His child that which He purposed in the beginning. Speaking of what He would have us to know, it is said:

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:19–20).

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man [created thing] pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27–28, author’s words added).

This is true of *“my sheep.”* However, remember in grace believers are not sheep but directly birthed offsprings of the heavenly Father. Salvation is not only a believing in and of something; but a greater event, far beyond our simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, hap-

pened on the Father’s part. No power created is sufficient to pluck them out of His hand for they are not only His by their consent of believing, but they are His as a Father owns His child. Because of the birthing, even the free will of the believer cannot bring him to the point of perishing (1 John 3:9).

“Who are thou that judgest another man-servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:4).

“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12).

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling [stumbling], and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24, author’s words added).

Such is the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning the sufficient power of God for the believer’s eternal keeping. Without the believer *“rightly dividing the word of truth”* and without the truths of grace based on the writings of Paul, *“the Apostle of Grace,”* whose writings give us the final gospel in the Scriptures, it is obvious that no one could ever see clearly the extent of God’s grace in the salvation of a sinner.

3. The Attitude of God

Could it be possible that God would so love an individual as to give His only Son to die for him, and still love him to the extent of following him with the pleadings and drawings of His grace until He has won that soul into His own family and household? He has re-birthed him anew by the impartation of His own seed and divine nature, and would He then be careless as to what becomes of the one He has thus given His all to save? Here, again, the Scriptures make a positive reply:

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:8-10).

“Much more” is a term of comparison. He gave His Son to die for us while we were yet sinners, and we were most ungodly when compared to His absolute purity and holiness. Such is the boundless love that He has commended to us through the Cross. But much more than His attitude of love toward sinners will be His attitude of love toward those whom He has cleansed, transformed, redeemed and birthed anew as His own beloved children in grace. If He will

save sinners at the price of the blood of His only begotten Son, much more, when they are justified, will He save them from wrath through Christ. This great comparison is repeated in the text apparently for emphasis. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, now that we are reconciled, how much more truly shall we be kept saved through His life and by the fact that He is now alive and appearing for us at the right hand of God. (See Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).

The testimony of the Bible, then, is that the attitude of love and care of God for those whom He has saved will be much more than the attitude of love for enemies and sinners as it has been manifested in the Cross. Not only is it revealed that God is disposed to keep the one whom He has saved, but the true child of God is also a gift of the Father to the Son (John 10:29; 17:6, 9, 11). Each one has been committed to the keeping power of the Father by the prayer of the Son: Holy Father, keep. That prayer will be answered.

Thus, it may be concluded that, should the saved one be lost, the eternal purpose of God will have been thwarted. The God who can design a universe whose remotest star shall not deviate by a second from its appointments throughout the ages, who can plan the universe from

the highest arch-angel to the marvelous organism of the smallest insect, whose purpose has never yet been known to fail, will not be defeated by the mere creature His hands have made. If the saved one is finally lost, it must be concluded that God is, to that degree, lacking in power. If so, He who has testified that not one of His sheep will ever perish, must yet retract His bold assertions and humbly submit to a power that is greater than His own. How can we possibly conclude that He who created and holds the universe in His hands, who calls things that are not as though they were, who could speak the word and dismiss every atom of matter and life from existence forever, must retire before the power of some creature His hand has created?

And, lastly, admitting the revelation concerning God's eternal purpose and His infinite power to accomplish that purpose, if it could still be proven that the rebirthed one might be lost, we would be shut up to the one and final conclusion that it could be so only because the all-powerful God did not sufficiently care to keep those whom His power had created as newborn children. But what do we find? The revelation is full of testimony concerning that very care. Who can measure the revealed devotion of His boundless love toward the objects of His saving grace?

Who will dare claim that He will not answer the prayer of His Son? There is no spiritual progress to be made until the believer is convinced that something final was accomplished at the Cross in regard to sin. Nor will it do to believe that the thing accomplished applies only to such sins as have already been committed, for which forgiveness has already been granted. Something has been done concerning every sin that ever has been committed, or that will yet be committed by man, and consequently every person has been vitally affected by the Cross. It does not upset our God to deal with sins before they are committed. Had He not done this, there could now be no grounds of salvation for any sinner in this age. So complete has been the sacrificial work of the Son of God that the Spirit has testified:

"Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

"He tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2:9).

"He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

"He died for all" (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

Who Can Separate Us?

I met a man not long ago that said he had been saved a number of times. I was puzzled; either he had never been born-again or he did not know what

being saved meant. There is only one birthing per person. Now someone may be saved, according to someone's doctrine, a number of times, but you can only be spiritually rebirthed one time. So many Christians are taught more about losing their salvation than they are taught about their new life in Christ.

Here is a short list of twenty-one things God has to do if someone thinks they can be un-birthed. God would have to: kill our spirit He made alive, take back the repentance He gave to us, take back the faith He gave to us, take back the free gift of eternal life, un-reconcile us, un-justify us, remember our sin by digging them out of the ocean, uncleanse us, take back the holiness and righteousness He gave us, un-birth our re-birth, take back the Holy Spirit He gave us, make us back into the old creation, un-adopt us, change His will and take back the inheritance He

gave to us, dis-fellowship us by not associating with us, take back everything in our heavenly bank account and finally take out a big eraser and erase our name from the Book of Life.

God never makes mistakes. Look at His record on this.

The gifts and the calling of God are irreversible and irrevocable. With God, there is no double jeopardy. We do nothing to be rebirthed, so how could we do something to lose the birthing. Jesus will never cast us out (John 6:37). God will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). Our birthing is dependant upon what Jesus did at the Cross and never dependant upon anything we do or do not do. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus with Christ alive in our spirit and life, and He in us does not sin (1 John 3:9).

We were chosen to be in Him before the World was created (Eph. 1:4). God has forgiven and forgotten our

sins, and He will never bring them back (Heb. 8:12; 10:17-18). Jesus says, My sheep know my voice and they follow me, and no one can snatch them out of my hand (John 10:27-28). Our Christian life is not up to us, it is up to God and His Son. If we are faithless, He is faithful (2 Tim. 2:13). We are not holding on to God, He is holding on to us.

Paul says in Romans 8:35-39 some important truth on this subject. One, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Why? Because the Christ-life is a love affair, and the Father that birthed us will never let go of us. Then Paul says he is persuaded that nothing can separate him from Christ. Persuasion is the key for the believer ignorant of the Christ in them. Only the Scriptures can persuade any one as to who they are in Christ. Believe it. You have eternal life now; it cannot be anything else but eternal. Accept it now and live it. †

(NECESSARY—
CONT. FROM P. 5)

the intersection of doctrine and the average person, but in the irrelevant way that the religious professionals who have surfaced to spread their damnable heresy in our day present doctrine. For example, the doctrine of the Incarnation is the test of relevancy. If Christ were only man, then He is irrelevant to our thought of God. If He

were only God then He is irrelevant to any experience of human life. It is becoming devastatingly clear, to me at any rate, that you cannot have Christian principles without Christ, and that the validity of Christian principles depends solely on Christ's authority. His authority depends on who He is – and that must be made clear in every gener-

ation, beginning with this one.

Christ Is the First Born Over All Creation

When we talk about the Incarnation, about Christ 'the image of the Invisible God,' we are stuck with a limitation of words. But words are not all we have; we have our lives to offer up as reflections of "the Word became

flesh,” that is, becoming flesh in us. Still we have to talk about it. But the question then is how do we talk about it?

Though it is true that we are limited as all our words and parables and illustrations are limited, Paul’s words are an eloquently perfect picture of Christ as he says: “The image of the invisible God.” Christ shows us what God is; Christ also shows us what all persons are meant to be. “Found in the fashion of man,” He was human, revealing the model of our humanity—the image in which we were created, the image that was shattered by sin when things went tragically wrong in the Garden. Also, in Him all that God has for us has already come to us. So He is the icon, the image of God, a window through which we can see the very nature of God; and a mirror, revealing our human possibility, by picturing our fallenness and the fallen state of all life against the image of our divine destiny.

Christ is the image, the icon of God: a representation that is perfect enough to be a true manifestation of God among us. He is also the representation and manifestation of what we are meant to be and which, through Him, we can be, and will be!

The monumental work of scholars through the centuries is complex, frustrating, and indeed, at

times, contradictory concerning the completeness, as well as the sufficiency, of the salvation of man through Jesus Christ, especially when Christ is viewed through the words of Paul in this passage. Was Christ uncreated and forever sharing in the being of God? Was Christ Himself the Creator? Paul would have been vehemently irate had he been in a verbal debate with the false teachers. The Judaizers of Galatia, who had also been



infected with the Gnostic spirit, would also have felt his ire as he affirmed that Christ was uncreated and was Himself Creator. He is pre-existent, one with God in personality and work before the human existence of Jesus.

Our problem as modern thinkers centers around the idea of pre-existence. For example, how can we conceive of something being before it even existed? The ancients did not have the problem that we modern ‘rational’ thinkers have. Both the Hebrew and the Greek thinkers knew that existence characterized the world of time

and space and matter, but those were not the only real things. The mind of the ancients could still understand the super-real existence that far outweighed that which was temporal. They would fix their hope, indeed their faith, on the eternal. What, then, has happened to our capacity to think in these two diverse realities? Ah, that is quite simple to answer, yet monumentally difficult to accept: Religion! That’s what happened! To which I can only caution each of you as well as myself, Believer, beware! Colossae may be history but not so the heresy.

Conclusion

Beloved, however the debate goes, and however puzzling the mystery may be, clear and concise truth emerges from the ancient pen and paper of the Apostle Paul: Christ has priority and sovereignty over all creation; Christ is the sole mediator between God and man. Christ has primacy over all created beings; over all of time, all of space, all of matter, and all of eternity.

In Jesus, the complete being of God came to dwell among men. Nothing is left out. All that was required to complete His work He brought with Him. He is the full and final revelation of God and nothing more is necessary for our eternal salvation—absolutely nothing! †

John says in 1 John 4:7-8 very plainly, God is love. He does not just give love; He is love. What He did not create in humans originally was *His* kind of love. In other words, He placed none of Himself, as love, in the humans when He created them. What would they most need? Love; not just love to love God by themselves. All history proves that even the best humans, within themselves, do not and cannot love God as God requires.

The next important thing God did to bring about His ultimate intention for humans, was to explain exactly what a new creature was. Based on the finished work of Jesus on the Cross, a work many believers did not comprehend, God would need a messenger fully taught on how the Cross made a new human. This new messenger would be given an explicit message of what the new creation, the new humanity, was to be. He would get his message directly from Jesus; and this would be a new gospel, the only gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Christ-life is the normal Christian life planned by our heavenly Father before the foundation of the earth was laid. It was His plan that the created human being would not and could not be a completed creation until he was joined to Christ in

its spirit. Thus, the ultimate plan of God was for a union to take place; Christ's Spirit would be joined to the human spirit, and this would create a whole new race of people. This would actually complete the Father's plan for humans (Col. 2:10).

The Father went to extraneous means to accomplish this. In the Old Testament, we have at least five different ways God would deal with humanity. These are time periods we call dispensations. He gave a different gospel to each of these time periods. His objective in this was to see if humans could obey Him and, most of all, fall in love with Him. In every dispensation, humans failed Him. In every case, with few exceptions, people failed. The Father gave them all He could. They had unbelievable miracles; they were provided for in every way; promises and covenants were made again and again by the Father, and still they failed.

The Father's objective in all of this was to see if humans, living on the bountiful earth, left on their own, would live for Him and love Him. This seems to be a test the Father put to Himself. He would give humanity every chance to prove their fidelity to Him. Why would a God that could do anything He wanted—even create a human that could do nothing but

love Him—go to such ends to prove a point? The answer is obvious. God is love, and He will be loved by creatures, whatever the cost to Himself; but He will never force the human to love Him. To do so would be contrary to His kind of love.

From the earliest part of the Bible, we begin to get the message that the creation of Adam and Eve and their succeeding family of humans would not and could not be the final form of humanity (Gen. 3:15). From this point forward in the Scriptures, we see this truth expanding. We see what will be hundreds of Scriptures pointing to a new and greater humanity than that which came from Adam and Eve, a humanity greater than any that is to be found in any of the past dispensations, a humanity that passes the original 'God test.' Since humanity cannot pass the test of obedience and love within themselves, the Father will bring about a new creation.

But because God is love, He will give humanity another and final chance to please Him. He will do the hardest and most heart-rending thing He has ever done. He will send a part of Himself, God the Son, to earth and perhaps people will listen to Him. As the last attempt to get humans to love and obey Him, God sent His Son to Israel. This was the first specific group of people God dealt with. You would think that if

God narrowed down to one nation, His people to be dealt with, ignoring all others, specifically ignoring the Gentiles, He could get what He wanted. But shame upon shame, Christ came to His own, and His own received Him not. In fact, they had a hand in killing Him.

But our Father was not without hope. He would have people of His own, and they would love and obey Him. The death of His Son did two things for the Father to have a humanity of His own. One: there had to be cleansing of sin for the past, present and future humans. This was accomplished through the blood that was shed from Christ's body while He hung on the cross.

Two: when Jesus died, the Father fixed it so that all the necessary victories Christ's death would provide would also be the victories of every human that believed their salvation was in the death of Christ. The Father would place every human in Christ's body so that when Christ died, they died; when Christ was buried, they were buried; when Christ was resurrected, they were

resurrected with Him, and when He ascended on high, they ascended. This time no chance was taken by the Father to get what He wanted out of humans. By the death of Christ on the cross and by placing humanity in Christ, the Father could now work toward the creation of a new human race.

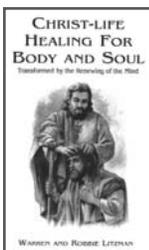
The most intricate part of the plan would be putting a part of Himself in this new creation for him to operate properly. To do this, He took nothing from Adam's race. What He would do is reach back before the world and Adam were created (Eph. 1:4) and put into operation His plan of humans being "in Christ." This would be the most intricate part, how to get Christ in humans and humans in Christ. Ah!! He would take an existing human and rebirth them.

He would rebirth them in their spirit, using their same old souls and bodies. This would not be difficult for Him to do; He is God, but it would be highly difficult for anybody to believe He would do it. He had Jesus of Nazareth to be the first to announce this awesome idea when He was

talking to Nicodemus (John 3:1-8). But even though Nicodemus was the religious leader of the day, he never understood what Jesus was talking about.

So, what would the Father do? If the leading scholar of that time could not conceive a rebirthing of humans, should the Father wait any longer? No, He would go ahead and put the Christ-life in every believer, whether or not they wanted or understood it. This would be His ultimate manifestation of grace. This happened on the Day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts chapter 2. One hundred twenty established believers plus 5,000 new ones were saved; not a one of them knew or realized that they were put in Christ and that Christ was birthed in them. They were born again and did not know it. The new humanity now existed, and they did not know about it. They could have known something about it had they remembered some of the last word Jesus spoke (John 14:20), but no, they did not know, and it would be another thirteen years before the Father would raise up a preacher to tell them all about it. †

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TRUE NATURE OF GOD

PART 3

By Don Byrd

Without the epistles of Paul, believers would never know the true nature of God. All believers can know about God, aside from the revelation of Christ in them, is the God of the Old Testament, which is also carried over into parts of the New Testament. The Old Testament God is one who is perfect and stands in pure holiness, righteousness and omnipotence. Believers are brought under condemnation when they fail to obey His laws and commandments to the letter. The representation we find in the Old Testament is not the true nature of God. In the Old Testament, He is not hesitant to judge and condemn those who are at fault and live in disobedience. Not until we get to the epistles of Paul do we find the true nature of God and discover who He really is, who He wants to be to us. Only in Paul's epistles do we find that *"there is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 8:1). Why is there no longer condemnation? Because He is Father to all who are in Christ, and this is His true nature. He has birthed all who have Christ

in them, for Christ is our Father's seed. This is the true nature of God, to be Father to those whom He has birthed, to have His very own offspring. Because He is Father is the reason there is no longer any condemnation toward those who are in Christ. No one, not even I, has the right to condemn me any longer. Only my Father has the right to condemn me, and He will never do that because condemnation has been done away in Christ. If God wants to condemn me, He must remove Christ from me to do so, and that would be contrary to His true nature and purpose. If other believers find fault in me and want to condemn me, they must also condemn Christ who is in me, for I am not separated from Him in any capacity for any reason. When I make derogatory remarks about other believers, I have ignored the truth that Christ is in them. I cannot condemn them unless I also condemn Christ in them. This is a beautiful truth and worthy of consideration each time I find a believer who I think may not meet my standards.

Can you see the beauty of the nature of God that He has also put in us? We are partakers of His divine nature, *"that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature"* (2 Peter 1:4). It is the Father's nature that is found in the epistles of Paul and the book of John. We are partakers of His divine nature in that we have Christ, His incorruptible seed, in us as the new nature. We have in us the nature of that seed which is Christ, His only begotten Son. Do you realize what this implies? It is a wonderful thing when believers reach the point where they see Christ in others. When believers reach this level of maturity, they no longer find reason to condemn others, though they may be at fault. When I first saw this principle operating in someone, I did not recognize it for what it really was. I thought the individual in whom this nature was being manifested was just trying to impress me by letting me know that he was too good to condemn others. What I see now is totally different. I think we have fallen short in our concept of the totality of what it

means to have Christ in us as our life. What do I mean by this? God is a holy, omnipotent, all wise, all-knowing, all-seeing God who stands in total righteousness and has never made a wrong judgment. Listen to me closely: God, in all His righteousness and holiness, cannot find one fault in a believer who has Christ in him! Can you possibly comprehend that? According to what Paul tells us in the letter to the Ephesians, we stand before God, our Father, in total perfection, blameless!

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph. 1:4).

If you want to know what you look like to our Father, just read the epistle to the Ephesians. Ephesians is the Father’s concept of those who have Christ in them. When I find fault in others, I have totally ignored the fact that God is their Father and only He has the right to condemn; and when He looks, all He sees is His beloved Son who is the epitome of righteousness and perfection! If you can find fault in another believer then you have not yet seen Christ in yourself as He really is! I have noticed that believers who have seen Christ in themselves no longer are critical of other believers. It is a very difficult thing to look at others and not see all of their failures and imperfections.

How Our Father Sees Us

When we look through our own eyes, we always see our own faults and the faults of others. When we use our own sight, we see our shortcomings, failures and mistakes. But it is totally different when our Father looks at us! *“To present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight”* (Col. 1:22). Do you realize what this declares? When our Father looks at you, you are holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight! This is how our Father sees born-again believers because Christ is now in them and they have the Son-nature birthed in them! This verse emphatically declares that this is how you appear in His sight! Our Father does not see us as we see ourselves; He sees us as though we are totally perfect in Christ, which is the way that we need to see ourselves. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to show us how we appear to our Father!

God is still there to condemn those with whom He finds fault and bring them to justice. But when He looks at those who have Christ in them, He cannot find fault! There are no short falls, nothing wrong, no sins, no faults, nothing amiss! Alleluia! Oh, the magnitude of the Christ whom He has placed in us! Little wonder Paul says, *“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ”*

(Eph. 1:12). Not only is there now no condemnation, but also our Father has nothing but praise to offer us! As long as believers live without knowing God is their Father and Christ is total perfection in them, they will find fault in themselves and in others. Oh, that we might see Jesus in others, as well as in ourselves. “I See Jesus in You” is certainly worthy to be our theme chorus. I do not know if this is what you see, but I do know that it is what our Father sees! Alleluia! Abba, Father!

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). There is no condemnation; it is gone forever if you are in Christ. If there is condemnation, then you must be looking outside of Christ to find it! I will no longer allow others to condemn me, whether they be sinner or saint. They will find I will not answer their accusations, but that does not mean I have accepted what they say! I no longer need to justify myself either to them or to myself. I trust in Him who is in me, and this is what they do not see, nor will they until they see Christ in themselves. Oh, how important it is that we see Christ in ourselves and in others. Then our chorus “I See Jesus in You” will become a reality. Indeed, it is Christ in you, the hope of glory!

The true nature of God was not known until the

revelation Paul had of Christ in him as the hope of glory. My favorite character in the Old Testament is Abraham because of the burning desire in him to be a father and to have a son. Abraham was a great and notable person, but you must read Genesis to know what Abraham meant to God. As grand and glorious as Abraham was to God, he cannot be compared to the believer found in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. If you think Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and so on, were special to Him, just wait until you read about yourself in Ephesians! Ephesians tells us about

the glory of one who excelleth:

"For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth" (2 Cor. 3:10).

Not even Abraham can measure up to what is found in Ephesians by any stretch of the imagination. Abraham was given great and exceeding promises, but what are those in comparison to the divine nature of the Father that has been placed in us through Christ who is in us? You are His offspring; none of the Old Testament characters could claim this. Now that Christ is in you, you are His beloved found in Christ! We need to see ourselves through the eyes of Him who

has the nature of Father! This is what Ephesians allows us to do. Father is the true nature of God! Ephesians 1 presents one who is the glory of God, the Father. Who is this magnificent one found in Ephesians 1? It is you with Christ in you as your only life. *"Ye might be partakers of the divine nature"* (2 Peter 1:4). We have our Father's nature in us! *"Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee"* (2 Chron. 6:18). Heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, but you are a container that can! How glorious you are with Christ in you! You! You! You are the heartbeat of Him who is our Father because of Christ in you! †



(EDITORIAL—CONT. FROM P. 3)

was created by and for Christ. This means that everything in this world has a God-touch on it, whether it is good or bad to us, to cause us to know our new-creation life—the human that has Christ in him. In other words, all life in the world has converging powers that are fixed as part of creation to push or crowd humans to Christ. God has had no other intention in creating this world than to fix it so it causes humans to come to the knowledge of Christ as their Savior. So, the world not only crowds a human to Christ, but it also teaches the human about the things that have to do with life and Christ in us.

2. Verse 17 says that Christ is before any thing that has been created and only by Him does anything consist. How clear the Scriptures are. Christ was in God's plan of Creation before anything was created and most of all Christ is the reason for Creation. What does this make the world then? The world is a schoolhouse for those humans that have accepted Christ as their Savior and are on their way to heaven.

3. Verse 18 says several things, but one of the most important things is that Christ might have the pre-eminence in all things. In Creation, He is the pre-eminent one. You see, anything that happens to you in this world has to do with Christ.

The world, good or bad to you, has a power in it that has to do with Christ. Even when bad things happen, the world that was made by Him and for Him will not separate you from Christ; nothing can separate you from Christ. You see, the world is a schoolhouse and you are a student learning a new life in Christ. If you do not go to the school of Christ in this world, you will receive no education as to who you really are in Christ. The world cannot defeat you, it can only train you for the Father's house. Remember, in the end the Father will throw this world away; it will have served its purpose, and the re-birthed ones will be with their Father in His house (Rev. 21:1). †

SPIRITUAL COMBAT VETERANS

By Cliff Gardner

A short time ago I had the opportunity to converse with a Vietnam War veteran who had been a U.S. Army Medical Corpsman. He related to me how deeply the experience had touched him. It appeared to me that he was “marked” for the rest of his life. He had seen, heard, and felt things that very few human beings ever do. He had lived at the doorway to eternity. All the rest of his life since has seemed somewhat disconnected as compared to that vivid era.

Thinking through this dear person’s recollections brought me to consider some parallels in the spiritual realm. To come to the understanding of life in Christ by a revelation by the Holy Spirit is like becoming a combat veteran. Combat veterans have come under enemy fire. They have faced death with all of its ramifications in the physical realm. They have seen comrades in arms fall dead by their side. Many have been severely wounded in battle. Later, those who have survived find it hard to relate to those who have not “been

there.” They don’t necessarily see themselves as something special, or deserving of honors or awards. They simply have been to a place in mind, soul and body that very few have gone. Their lives have been forever touched by what they have seen, heard, thought and felt. It has marked and made them different. They may take the rest of their lives to evaluate the meaning of it all, especially when they try to relate to those who weren’t there.

Those whose “processing” by the heavenly Father has taken them to the spiritual war zone where life and self-effort religion are in conflict are like these combat veterans. Many have been severely wounded and are crippled in their journey from such religion to life. They may have seen religion kill loved ones or friends—yes, some physically. Some are so scarred in mind and soul that they are like the shell shocked veteran who jumps at every sound; they see death as the only way out! Those who survive the battle and finally see life in Christ may find that fellow-

ship with “religious” Christians can be difficult. They have Christ’s love operating in them and begin to love their enemies—and find that some enemies may even come from the dogma of the religious system. Most attempts at bringing light and life to those left back in organized religion are found to be futile. These veterans may become almost paranoid in their loneliness and may be quite isolated from the mainstream of Christianity. In their aloneness, they will finally learn that the only true basis of fellowship is with the Father and the Son. They begin to be aware that other veterans of the spiritual battle are out there and that the Father has taught them the same basic lesson. They begin to see Christ in each other. They become somewhat of an enigma to the religious system that sees them as promoters of some sort of heresy. Being rejected isn’t easy, but often it is necessary to stay on the journey to the Father’s house. These dear veterans of the spiritual battle stop trying to be “spiritual.”

They give up on “trying to be like Jesus.” They have faced their own death and are beginning to know and live resurrection life by the Christ (the resurrected one) in them. They no longer are stimulated and moved by the world’s problems and needs unless it is by Christ in them. They care, but are learning to operate by Christ in them as wisdom rather than by their fleshly perceptions. They will see that God’s work needs no human promotion (which is only a distraction from the truth of God’s power and sovereignty). They will see the physical world as a “schoolhouse” where lessons are taught and learned along the journey. They see death as a release and graduation to where life is lived in its full reality—the Father’s house! There are some who come close to the battle but have not experienced actual combat. They are curious

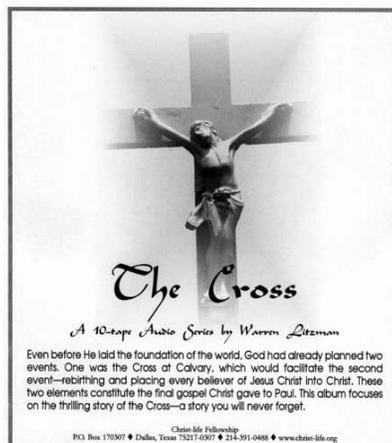
to hear the veteran’s story and act as war correspondents that report battle conditions but actually have never been fired upon. Still others of those who are very active in religion are like those who are involved in guerilla warfare who cannot discern who the real enemy is and, in the darkness, end up fighting on the wrong side possibly being killed by those they trusted.

The U.S. Army issues a badge to those who have completed a tour of duty in combat. It is called the “Combat Infantryman Badge.” It identifies those who wear it as “having been there.” Our Father knows those who have been there in this spiritual battle between religion and life. They don’t wear a visible badge, but they are marked by love, hope and grace. Some battle scars take a long time to heal and call for caution and

trust in, and rest on, Christ’s humility in us as our humility. The most profound mark is that these spiritual combat veterans seem always to be pressing on to an ever deepening relationship with the Father and the Son. They have no confidence in their flesh or in the flesh of others. They have begun to rely on the Holy Spirit as the source to unlock the mystery of Christ in them as their only hope of glorifying the Father. While still living in the third dimensional world, they begin to realize that they are partakers of a new spiritual dimension that transcends time right into eternity.

Be encouraged, dear brothers and sisters, as you press on! The fire and the wounds from the spiritual battle are nothing compared to the surpassing glory of knowing Him who is our life intimately. †

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