



*Reflections on the
Transforming Power of God*

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About The Book

Dear reader,

The purpose of this work “Reflections on the Transforming Power of God” is to glorify God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, to encourage believers in their walk and interest others to pursue Him. If you are encouraged by what you read herein or become interested in a deeper understanding of God, please contact us at:

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Transforming power; The Work of God on Behalf of Man

Introduction

In today's world, the God of the Bible, if believed in at all, has been relegated to being not relevant in the affairs of mankind. John the Revelator wrote that in the last days Jesus, God the Son, will be expelled from the church He created and will seek to have fellowship with anyone who would ask Him to come back. (Revelation 3:20).

The author of this little booklet has written a book entitled "One Christian's Perspective of Man's Dilemma God's Solution." The eleven chapters that are in it present a God who is sovereign over all of creation and is bringing this present dispensation to a close. This booklet is the second in a series of booklets that continues with that perspective. It is intended to promote God to those who may be seeking Him, and it is intended to encourage Christians who may be disheartened.

It is the author's prayer that all who read this work will be greatly blessed. Beyond this, the author prays that God is honored.

Our Beliefs

One True God

We believe that there is only one living and true God, infinite in every excellence, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three personal distinctions, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one in essence and equal in every divine perfection. (Exodus 20:2-32; 1st Corinthians 8:6).

We believe in the absolute Deity of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; that He was divine as no other man can be, being God Himself, existing from all eternity co-equal with the Father and the Spirit; that He never ceased to be God for one instance and that His humiliation did not consist in laying aside His Deity; that as a man He was miraculously begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. (1st John 5:20; John 1:1-2; Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:26-38).

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with the Father and Son and of the same substance and nature; that He convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment, bears witness to the truth, is the agent of the New Birth and that He seals, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses to, sanctifies, and helps the believer, indwelling every true child of God. (2nd Corinthians 13:14; John 14:16-17; Romans 8:14-27; John 16:7-15).

The Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible as originally written was verbally inspired and the product of Holy Spirit inspired men, and therefore

without admixture of error for its matter. We believe that it is the true center of Christian union and the only infallible rule for all human conduct, creeds and opinions. (2nd Timothy 3:16-17; 2nd peter 1:19-21).

Creation

We believe that God created the heavens and the earth in six literal days, including all life, “each after its own kind,” by direct act and not by the process of evolution. (Genesis 1 and 2; Colossians 1:16-17; John 1:3).

Satan

We believe that Satan is a distinct created being. That he became other than what he was created when iniquity was found in him, that he is the God of this age, leader of all the powers of darkness and sin, and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire. (Ezekiel 28:14-15; Matthew 4:1-3; 2nd Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 20:10).

The Fall of Man

We believe that man was created, in innocence and true holiness, under the law of his maker and in the image of God, but by voluntary transgression fell from his created state and became sinful. In his fall he became totally depraved and wholly disposed toward evil, possessing neither the ability nor the inclination to seek God apart from the regeneration grace of the Holy Spirit; that all are sinners by nature and by conduct, and therefore are under just condemnation

without defense or excuse. (Genesis 3:1-6; Ephesians 4:23; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 1:26; Romans 5:12; Romans 3:10-19; Genesis 6:5; Ephesians 2:1; Romans 1:8; Ezekiel 18:19-20; Romans 1:32; Romans 1:20; Galatians 3:22).

The Only Atonement For Sin

We believe that the only escape from the condemnation of sin is through redemption wrought by Jesus Christ when He voluntarily took upon Himself a human body and nature, yet did not sin and by His vicarious suffering, death and resurrection made full satisfaction to the justice of God, and that “in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins;” that the blessings of salvation are given on the grounds of grace to all who believe and confess that Jesus is Savior and Lord; and that it is the immediate duty of all to accept these offers of mercy. (John 1:1-3; John 1:14; John 3:16-17; Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 1:7).

Grace and The New Birth

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about in a manner above our comprehension by our sovereign God, not by culture or the will of man, but solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with the Word of God, so as to irresistibly draw men to Himself and secure their voluntary obedience to the gospel; that the proper evidence of the new birth

appears in the holy fruits wrought by it; repentance, saving faith, and newness of life. (John 3:3; 2nd Corinthians 5:17; 1st John 5:1; John 3:6-7; Acts 16:20-33; 2nd Peter 1:4; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1; Galatians 5:22; 2nd Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 2:13; John 3:8; John 1:12-13; Ephesians 5:9).

Further

We believe in God's sovereign election whereby in eternity past He chose some to be recipients of His grace in Christ. We believe that true believers in Christ are distinguished from mere professors by their persevering attachment to the Savior made evident as the Holy Spirit unfailingly brings to completion His work within them; that, moreover, the saints are eternally secure, kept by the power of God through faith unto ultimate redemption. (John 8:31; Psalms 37:24; Psalms 37:28; 1st John 3:9; 1st John 2:27; 1st John 5:18; Hebrews 3:14; 1st John 2:19; John 17:12; Romans 8:28-39; Luke 10:42; Luke 22:31-32; John 6:37-40; John 10:28-30; Romans 11:29; 1st Corinthians 1:8-9; 2nd Corinthians 1:21-22; Philippians 1:6; Philippians 2:12-13; Jude 1:24-25; 1st John 4:4; 2nd Timothy 1:12; 2nd Timothy 4:18; 1st Peter 1:4-5; John 4:14; John 5:24).

Further

We believe that God has elected those whom become saved but He does not prevent others from believing and coming to Him for salvation, if they would. But the truth is, left to himself, man has no desire to search Him out. (John 3:19-20; John 5:39-40).

The Return of Christ

We believe in the bodily, personal, pre-millennial, return of Jesus Christ; that He will come before the seven years tribulation period to catch away His church, coming only in the air, and that He will come with His Church at the close of the tribulation judge the living nations and to set up His kingdom. (1st Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 24:31-46; Revelation 19:11-21).

The Resurrection

We believe in the resurrection of the bodies of the dead; that believers who sleep in Jesus will be resurrected at the coming of Christ for His church and caught up with the translated living saints to meet the Lord in the air, and that those of the tribulation who die will be resurrected at the end of the tribulation, and the unbelieving dead of all ages will be resurrected at the close of the Millennial kingdom and stand in their bodies at the Great White Throne judgment to receive their final doom. (John 5:21-30; 1st Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 7:9-17; Revelation 20:11-15).

Priesthood of all Believers

We believe in the New Testament order that every born-again Christian is a priest of God. This position of being a believer-priest under our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, puts every Christian on the same level of priesthood. The believer-priest in the pew has just as ready access into the presence of God the Father and to the truth of God as does the believer-priest in the pulpit. (1st Peter 2:5-9; Revelation 1:5-6).

The world is falling apart around us (humanly speaking) and we present the above so that you, the readers of our weekly devotionals may know that we believe the only hope for the world is in God Himself, and Him alone.

We have written a book that addresses many of these beliefs in greater detail and it may be obtained from the author stevlampman@comcast.net

The nature of Sin?

We find from the Biblical account that Adam was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) having a desire to fellowship with and worship Him. However, not very far into the narrative (Genesis 3) we find that when enticed, Adam chose to disobey the only prohibition God placed on him. He and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:17; 3:6) and immediately they were transformed from being pure and righteous to being impure and unrighteous. Immediately, they no longer desired God's fellowship nor did they worship Him any longer. Self-will and self-satisfaction replaced their desire to please God. This desire was so overwhelming that they separated themselves in thought and deed from Him. God had warned that in the day they were disobedient they would die spiritually toward Him and the process of physical death would be commenced. So serious was their spiritual separation from Him that He likened it to death, as physical death separates one from all that is living so spiritual death separates one from Holy God.

But how was this condition passed from Adam to all that followed? An important question, and the answer to it, is argued by many. Some hold that Adam's sin is imputed, claiming that Adam was not only the natural, but also the representative or federal head of the human race. Some hold that sin is passed seminally. Others hold that sin is hereditary, that man inherited the proneness to sin, but this proneness does not imply guilt. Still others deny any necessary connection between Adam's sin and the character and actions of his descendants.

The Apostle Paul tells us that God's judgment came upon all persons (the judgment of death-spiritual separation) because of the offense of one (Romans 5:18). However, each person will be held accountable for their own sin as John the Revelator informs us in Revelation 20:11-15,

"¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

Unredeemed man will not be able to blame Adam for their sin, although they may try, each will be held accountable for his or her own sin. However, this is not at all unchangeable, consider Paul's letter to the Romans once again.

"¹²Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— ¹³(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one

man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. ¹⁶And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. ¹⁷For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) ¹⁸Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. ²⁰Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

As Paul and Silas told the Philippian Jailor (Acts 16:31), "God has provided the remedy to man's plight. It is found in God the Son, believe in (commit yourself to) Him and you will be saved."

All Persons Will Meet God

There have always been some who deny the existence of God and live their lives reflecting that denial. That is, they attempt to extract from their present experience of life all that they can because they are convinced that when they die life is over; one just simply stops being. There are others who believe that God exists and that there is a continuance of life after the death of their bodies, but that He is a loving benevolent God and will not be extreme in His judgment of them. They believe that their good works (so called) will overshadow their bad deeds and God will reward them with heaven and all that that entails.

However, it must be said at the onset of this devotional that they will someday meet God and discover how wrong they were. When they, all such persons of whatever persuasion, meet Him they will be judged according to their conduct of life, their sin. The Bible tells us that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and further, “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a). God is a loving benevolent God, but He is also a holy God and cannot let sin go unpunished or be in His presence. There is life after death and all will enter into it. All will continue living after the death of their bodies. Some will enjoy eternity with God, but others will forever be cast away from Him into eternal torment. There is no third option. Heaven is a glorious place, a place filled with the glory of God, and nothing short of that glory can be in His presence. All persons from Adam until now fall short of the glory of God and therefore, in their natural state, cannot be in the presence of God. Why? All have sinned and come short of that glory.

Yet, God is a benevolent, loving God and for some that love and benevolence has restored them to a righteous holy state so they can be in His presence. The second part of Romans 6:23 tells us that “the gift of God is eternal life.” (6:23b). Then it goes on to say that this gift came (comes) “through Jesus Christ.” (6:23c). Putting Romans 3:23 and 6:23 together we read, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Ah, the gift! It is eternal life through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom God gave as the propitiation for sins. Those who reject God will not search out this gift, nor will those who believe that their good works outweigh their bad deeds. To seek salvation one must know that he or she is lost.

Additionally, according to the inspired Word of God, God has endowed all persons with a divine light that testifies that He is, and a conscience that convicts them of sin. We read from John’s Gospel, *“¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²The same was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. ⁴In him was life; and the life was the light of men. ⁵And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness overcame it not.”* (John 1:1-5). The spiritual life that was and is in Jesus was and is so powerful that even man’s rejection of Him (or the spiritual illumination that is of His being) could not and cannot overcome it. Mankind may claim to deny God, but in his spirit he knows better.

As to being convicted of sin by conscience we read from Romans 1:18-20, *“¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; ¹⁹Because that which may be known of God is*

manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. ²⁰For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”

Such persons know the truth. They have been convicted by their God given consciences, but in their rebellion against that truth they willfully and joyfully involve themselves in all kinds of wickedness as the remaining verses of this chapter tells us. Remember, we all will meet God someday. Some of us will be blessed with His presence for eternity, others will be cast out into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Also remember there is no third option.

Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.”* (John 14:6). Peter testified, *“Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 14:12). The Apostle Paul in answer to the Philippian jailor’s question, *“what must I do to be saved”* said, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”* (Acts 16:31).

Jesus was killed because of His claim, but has risen and now sits at the right hand of the Father. Peter suffered martyrdom because of his testimony, and Paul was beheaded refusing to denounce his belief in, and commitment to, Jesus. What stronger testimony could there be?

It Is Important What You Believe

When I was a child the belief that God exists was almost universal. He was honored in almost all walks of life. Here in the United States He was talked about, was on display by one venue or another, was worshipped, was celebrated by holiday and looked to for direction by many, including our governmental leaders, but this has tragically changed. Today in many parts of the world He is no longer believed in or is relegated to not being of any relevance. Here in the United States, atheism has become the religion of many. Many of those who still believe in Him view Him as being impotent, or at best not being interested in the affairs of man. However, there are many of us who still believe that “He is” and not only believe that “He is” but also believe that He is sovereign over all there is. He rules in our hearts and we believe that He rules over all of creation.

In our hearts He rules, bringing about the change to our lives that He desires. As the Apostle Paul wrote, He is conforming us to the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28). And in that conforming He has regenerated in us new spiritual life, a life wherein He resides; giving direction, purpose and an appetite for that which is good. **In the world** He restrains evil to the point where life and order is sustained and the accomplishment of His will is being worked out.

If God were to remove Himself from the world and from the hearts of those in whom He resides, there would be utter chaos. He has established His laws and most of humanity lives by a similarity of those laws. Again, returning to the Apostle Paul’s writings, we read

that the Antichrist is the one who Satan will control and will restrain by God until God removes those restraints (2nd Thessalonians 2:7-8). Christ will do this someday to bring about the destruction of all unrighteousness and the establishment of His kingdom on earth.

John the Revelator writes that there is coming a judgment when all men and Satan will be judged and receive their just rewards. Consider, *“¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ²He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.*

⁴And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

⁷Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them

together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. ⁹They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:1-15 NKJV).

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection but woe unto the person who has not believed in God and has not allowed Him to rule over one’s life.

It is Appointed

“²⁷And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27-28 KJV). C.I. Scofield, D.D. expounding on this verse wrote, “Physical death is a consequence of sin (Genesis 3:19) and the universality of death proves the universality of sin (Romans 5:12-14). Physical death affects the body only, and is not cessation of existence or of consciousness (Luke 16:23; Revelation 6:9-10). All physical death ends in the resurrection of the body (Job 19:25-26). The soul and spirit of man live on independently from the body when it dies.”

The quoted verses:

Genesis 3:19 *“In the sweat of thy face shall you eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was taken: for dust you are, and unto dust shall you return.”*

Romans 5:12-14 *“¹²Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: ¹³(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.”*

Luke 6:23 *“And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”*

Revelation 6:9-10 *“⁹And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God,*

and for the testimony which they held: ¹⁰And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

Job 19:25-26 “²⁵For I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: ²⁶And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

The blessing for the Christian is that at the death of his body the spirit will immediately be in the presence of the Lord, having the price of their sins paid. Paul testified, “¹For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: ³If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. ⁴For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. ⁵Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. ⁶Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:1-6).

Job the ancient, Moses, and the apostles John and Paul, expected their spirits to live on should physical death come to them. Further, they all expected that their bodies would be resurrected. Job and Moses believed in the promise that God would justify them because of their faith in His promised Redeemer, the promise that told of their sins being placed on Him. John met this redeemer personally, and Paul met Him by special appointment. They all knew that their

sins had been judged and dealt with, but it is not so for those who will not believe God and turn to Him for salvation. Their sin must still be dealt with. This is why the writer of Hebrews wrote, *“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”*

This need not be. Join Job, Moses, John, Paul and millions of other who have put their faith in God’s promise! *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” (Acts 16:31).*

The Holy Spirit at Work

Jesus told Nicodemus (and us by extension) that for a person to understand anything about the Kingdom of God or to enter into it that person must be born again, that is, born from above, from heaven (John 3:3-5). Being born from above—from heaven, takes such a birth out of the hands of man and places it into the hands of God. This is confirmed by Jesus' next words, “⁵Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:5-8 NKJV). Jesus declared that God has sent forth His Spirit (the Holy Spirit) into the world to give spiritual life (to regenerate spiritual life) to spiritually dead persons. Which includes all persons before the rebirth occurs.

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians affirms that this work of the Spirit occurs when the recipient is still spiritually dead toward God. We read, “¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in

trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.” (Ephesians 2:1-5 NKJV).

How does the Holy Spirit accomplish this? How does He create spiritual life in a person who is spiritually dead or who desires to be and is spiritually separated from God? It cannot be accomplished by man—he is after all dead toward God. Spiritual life originates in heaven by the will of God according to His good pleasure. A great testimony of being spiritually reborn by the will of God is found in the Gospel of John. We read, “¹⁰He (Jesus-the Son of God) was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:10-13 NKJV). Spiritually reborn not because of heredity, that is by blood, nor by a person’s own desire (the will of the flesh), nor of another’s will, i.e. a family member or friend’s will (the will of man), but by the will of God.

Isn’t this what happened in the life of Abraham, Israel’s forefather? Joshua 24:2-3 informs us that Abraham, his father Terah, and his brother Nahor were as all other persons, idol worshippers. But God took Abraham away from that life. Genesis 12:1-4a tells us that, “¹Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great And you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ ⁴So Abram

departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”

We are not told what transpired between God and Abraham that changed Abraham, but assuredly it was the work of the Holy Spirit; because one cannot come to God unless they are born of God (John 3:1-85; Ephesians 2:1-5).

We who have been born again should be grateful, (If we truly have been born again we are grateful!), for what God the Holy Spirit has accomplished in our life.

All others who are stirred by such a message as this should recognize that it is the Holy Spirit who is stirring your heart and mind. Turn to God and you will not be disappointed.

Spiritual Rebirth: An Absolute Necessity

In the gospel of John we read of a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus, who having heard of Jesus and the miracles He had been doing, went to Him on a certain night seeking to learn more about Him. We read, *“¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him (3:1-2).”* One can only wonder what was truly in the mind of Nicodemus that night. He was after all a Pharisee, one who had risen within the ranks of the Pharisees to hold a position on the ruling council. He would have been well versed in, and a strict observer of the Mosaic Law. There can be no doubt that he believed that his right standing before God depended on his strict observance to this law.

Jesus, however, knowing what Nicodemus believed, stopped him from going further with his salutation and said, *“³I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again... no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, You must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (3:3; 7-8).*

This was certainly new to Nicodemus. All of his life he had been taught that a right standing before Holy God and the way of his

spiritual redemption was by following the Law. That is, earning it by self-effort. He and his teachers did not understand that the Law was given because of sin. That there is none righteous or could be righteous by attempts at keeping the Law because all sin and come short of the glory of God (Galatians 3:19-22; Romans 3:10-12; 21-24).

Hearing these things, Jesus' testimony about the necessity of being born again, Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" (John 3:4). His question underscores the truth that the natural man cannot comprehend spiritual things (1st Corinthians 2:14). That it takes a rebirth of the inner man (man's spirit) to understand such things.

In answer to Nicodemus' question Jesus said, *"⁵I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."* (John 3:5-6). Nicodemus needed to understand, and all persons must understand, that something else must be added to a person's physical birth for them to see and enter the kingdom of God. One must have a spiritual rebirth, a birth necessitated because of being spiritually dead toward God (Genesis 2:15-17; Ephesians 2:1-6); a birth produced by the Spirit of God.

Clearly, one must be born again spiritually in order to understand and by faith accept what Jesus said next to Nicodemus (and to us by extension). *"¹³No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ¹⁴And*

as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:13-18 NKJV).

Thank you, Father, for what you have accomplished and are accomplishing in us who have been brought to new spiritual life, and we pray that you will grant this same new life to many others.

Born Again By The Will of God

Jesus said to Nicodemus and indirectly to us, ³*“unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....⁵unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”* (John 3:3; 5-8 NKJV).

The term born again means to be born from above. This is substantiated by Jesus’ explanation that ⁸*“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”* The Spirit is the Holy Spirit of God and Jesus said that for a person to see or enter the kingdom of God one must be born of the Spirit.

What then does it mean to be born of the Spirit? John gives the answer earlier in the Gospel. ⁶*“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. ⁸He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. ⁹That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”* (John 1:6-13 NKJV). John

writes that a person is born from above by the will of God. Such a birth is not based on heredity, self-will, or the will of another, but by the will of God.”

The next question logically is how does the Spirit bring this about? It is by His efficacious call and His convicting and convincing work (Romans 29-30; Ephesians 2:1-5; and John 16:7-11). As a person senses this working of God in their life the Holy Spirit causes a person to turn to Jesus for their new birth, their salvation. He said, *“14And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” (John 3:14-21 NKJV).*

Being born again, being born from above therefore, is the work of God. He calls a person to Himself, convicts one of their sin and convinces one that to be born again, to be saved, they must turn to Jesus.

Because of a great desire for certain friends to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, I add this paragraph. There are those who hold that being born again can occur in one's infancy, as a baby. This, they say, is what happens when a baby is baptized. However, the above cited passages refute such a claim. A person must come to God by faith, trusting in His provision if one is to be saved, born again. This cannot occur in the heart and mind of an infant. It is beyond an infant's capability.

Repentance That That Leads To Salvation

I was talking with a friend the other day about repentance. He recited a prayer that many of his faith recite ritually believing that such a recital brings forgiveness of sin and restoration to a right standing before God. We talked about this for some time and agreed that such a prayer, recited no matter how many times, when prayed without sincerity, may bring a sense of relief from guilt, but this prayer does little to bring actual forgiveness or restoration to a right standing with God. To repent means to turn from something to something. In this case, it means to turn from sin – to the Triune God.

Jesus, by parable, instructed many who trusted in their own worth about the lack of true repentance in this manner, *“¹⁰Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ ¹³And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* (Luke 18:10-14).

Repentance that is of the saving kind brings change. One who continually recites a prayer, but then goes out and sins habitually in the same way is not sincere. The publican who prayed from the heart was sorrowful over his sin. He was sincere and sought forgiveness.

A change had been wrought in this man's heart and soul; not so with the Pharisee. That the publican went to his house justified is proof of saving repentance. Repentance, after all, is one of the things that the Holy Spirit brings about in the life of the one who has come to Jesus by faith.

Unimaginable Mercy and Grace

A few weeks ago a friend asked about the acronym “TULIP” of Calvinism and rather than get into a deep theological discussion about it I thought best not to answer his question at that time. In his curiosity he went on line to www.thecalvinonline.com website and came up with the following:

T—total depravity. This doesn’t mean that people are as bad as they can be. It means that sin is in every part of one’s being, including the mind and will, so that man cannot save himself.

U—unconditional election. God chooses to save people unconditionally; that is, they are not chosen on the basis of their own merit.

L—limited atonement. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was for the purpose of saving the elect.

I—irresistible grace. When God chooses to save someone, He will.

P—perseverance of the saints. Those people God chooses cannot lose their salvation; they will continue to believe. If they fall away, it will be only for a time.

My friend is Arminian in his theology and cannot accept that God doesn’t efficaciously call everyone when he chooses certain ones for salvation and not others.

In answer, God **does offer** salvation to everyone. John 3:16 for instance says, *“¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but*

*have everlasting life. But, it is also true that all persons before regeneration are spiritually dead toward God and have no desire or ability to believe until God works the work of regeneration in them. Ephesians 2:1-5 clearly supports this truth. “¹And you He made alive, **who were dead in trespasses and sins,** ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵**even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved.**”*

The Apostle Paul in explanation of salvation wrote, “⁹*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*”

I would ask my friend, irrespective of others, have you trusted in Jesus for your salvation and do you openly confess with your mouth that God has raised Him from the dead?

Believing in Jesus for salvation means just that. He has paid the price of your salvation. If one believes that they can be saved in any other way they don't truly believe in the finished work of Jesus. From the cross Christ said, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30), meaning He had fulfilled God's requirement of salvation. There is nothing one can add to His offering. Peter speaking of Jesus proclaimed, “¹²*Nor*

is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12). If one truly trusts in Jesus for their salvation, they will eventually come to understand that it was God who called them out of spiritual darkness in order that they could believe and will be thankful for His mercy and grace.

Salvation and Commitment

Recently I heard a Bible teacher exclaim that, “Salvation is a free gift from God. It is given by Him to the undeserved. There is nothing that a person can do to earn his or her salvation.” The Apostle Paul affirms this truth in his letter to the Ephesians, he wrote, *“¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.”* (Ephesians 2:1-5 NKJV). Paul included himself and his fellow companions (the Jews) in this assessment. Stating that before new life was granted, all of them were dead toward God, both the Gentiles and the Jews. By extension, this falls to all persons from Adam to the present.

Considering the above assessment further we find that God has a purpose in the granting of this new life. It is to end the separation that exists between Himself and fallen man. God restored spiritual life to Adam and He has restored spiritual life to many across many centuries, continuing to our day. This new life opens and keeps open the line of communication between God and the recipients of it. This new life causes the recipient to turn from (repent of) their sin. It brings about a change of behavior (a new lifestyle), and it causes the recipient to avow the Lordship and authority of Jesus Christ over one's life.

God doesn't make His redeemed mind-numbed robots. We are all to work out our salvation, that is, the child of God is to work out the salvation given freely to them by God (Philippians 2:5-15). This new life makes it possible to live a Godly life of discipline and obedience, to live a life that demonstrates what God has brought about, and the believer's part is to be actively engaged. James, the Lord's half-brother after the flesh, said that the believer was to be "*a doer of the word and not a hearer only.*" (James 1:22). He went on to list several things that would qualify a believer as being a doer and not a hearer only (verses 1:26-2:26). He pointedly asked in verse 14 of chapter 2, "¹⁴*What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?*" So certainly, as the aforementioned Bible teacher proffered, salvation is a free gift, but there is a cost to the believer. Salvation is not a free ride. It comes with surrender and commitment.

A person cannot truly claim salvation and live as they did before this new life was birthed in them. In another letter, (his letter to the Galatians), Paul wrote that his readers were to "*Walk in the Holy Spirit*" and if they did they "*would not fulfill the lust of the flesh*" (Galatians 5:1). Walking in the Holy Spirit meant that they were to be committed to His authority, to His direction over their lives and this holds true of us.

New Spiritual life is regenerated (is birthed) by the Holy Spirit as He convicts persons of their sin, convinces them that they are separated from Holy God and are in need of His mercy. As the Holy Spirit performs this supernatural work in people they find themselves believing these truths and committing their life to Him, committing them to Him not just for salvation but to His bringing about change

to their lives. God's purpose for His children is that they be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son (Romans 8:29). Having been adopted by God, we as His children are to have a different mind-set than in the days when we lived according to the flesh, in the days in which we were controlled by our old nature.

If a person should claim salvation and not experience or desire change it is very doubtful that new spiritual life has been birthed and they are not regenerated.

Our Salvation

December 25th of each year is the day that has been traditionally set aside as the birth of Jesus. Some think of Him as the Son of God. Some think of Him as the Christ, the anointed of God. Others, while acknowledging His birth, do not attach much significance to it or to His life. To these it must be said that the Bible declares of Him that He was God manifested in the flesh. The Apostle John spoke of this in the gospel that bears his name, *“¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the light of men... ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:1-4; 14 NKJV).

John walked with Jesus for almost three years and witnessed many things that attested to His deity. In his presence, Jesus changed water into wine. He multiplied five loaves of bread and two fish into enough food to feed hundreds that had gathered to hear Him. He gave sight to the blind. He healed the lame. He walked on water. He cast out demons. He raised the dead. John of course was not the only witness of these things. Others who followed Jesus also witnessed these same things. Many of these followers went to their death rather than deny what they had witnessed. So yes, Jesus’ deity was proven, at least to them. Such conviction was not peculiar to them. Hundreds and thousands that came to believe those proofs of His deity committed themselves to Him and were killed during the first century because of their commitment. Furthermore, it didn’t end

with those of the first century. Because of their testimony and faithfulness millions more have come to believe and trust in Jesus for their salvation; many who have also been martyred (killed).

It's hard to imagine what Joseph and Mary thought on the night of His birth as they looked into Jesus' eyes for the first time. Perhaps Mary recalled the words of the angel Gabriel who said to her. ³⁰ *Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.* ³¹ *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.* ³² *He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.* ³³ *And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there will be no end.* (Luke 1:30-33). Perhaps she recalled her question to Gabriel, *"How can this be, since I do not know a man?"* And Gabriel's answer, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."* Perhaps Joseph recalled the words of the messenger who had been sent to him in a dream. ^{20b} *Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.* ²¹ *And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.* (Matthew 20b-21).

Certainly, they both knew that Jesus was of the miraculous, but probably did not know of His eventual death, burial and resurrection. Joseph would die before those things took place. Mary would live to see them occur. What joy must have overwhelmed her when she saw

Jesus for the first time after His resurrection! When she looked into the eyes of the risen Jesus and full understanding came to her. She was not only standing before her son, but she was standing before her Lord and Savior.

When we consider Jesus during the Christmas season may we each see Him for who He truly is, God the Son, manifested in the flesh, the Savior of those who turn to Him in faith, and the Lord of the world.

God's Grace

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1st Peter 1:1-5).

In the above text verse 2 reads, *“²Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.”*

Many argue against the election of God in salvation, saying that if people are saved by election then God isn't fair. “What about all those He doesn't elect?” They ask. I answer. If one is not elected then they would be choosing God. However, it should be pointed out that to choose God there has to be an examination of one's self; a self-examination that would result in an undeniable conclusion of one's sinfulness. This conclusion has to be one that identifies a person's need of God's forgiveness, mercy and a turning to Him, but doesn't that lead us to God's election? Who does He forgive; but a person who concludes that they are a sinner and that they are in need of forgiveness and mercy. However, the Apostle Paul said that this is

impossible for the natural man to do. Note, “*But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*” (1st Cor. 2:14). And The Lord Jesus said, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3). With this being said, I turn back now to our text, (1st Peter 1:1-5).

It can't be misunderstood. It is clear that Peter is writing to those who have been elected. He wrote, “*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*” (vs.2). These to whom Peter was writing had been elected to salvation according to the foreknowledge of God. Peter further wrote that they had been set aside “*in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*” We note that they were set apart (sanctified) by the Spirit of God for the purpose of “*obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*” They were set aside for obedience. If it had been up to their choosing wouldn't their obedience have preceded their being set aside? They were set aside to become obedient and for the “*sprinkling of the blood*” of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't Peter reminding his readers that they had been elected, that they had been set aside for sanctification (maturation), and for the application of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to their account? Yes, yes, and yes.

As we examine the Scriptures, we soon learn that God's election wasn't just applicable to those to whom Peter had addressed in his letter, but to all those whom God would bring to saving faith. We also read from Paul's letter to the Romans, “²⁸*And we know that all things work together for good to those who*

love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” (Romans 8:28-30). Please note, this is written in the past tense. God didn’t and doesn’t wait for people to choose Him. He, according to the passage, chooses them. He predestines them to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and He glorifies them. From Paul’s letter to the Ephesians we read,

“¹and you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:1-7).

To be a recipient of God’s grace. What a wonder!

The Work of God

The work of God is a triune work. It is the work of God the Father, the work of God the Son, and the work of God the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, while each person of the trinity has a unique performance in that work, the purpose of each person is the same, to satisfy God's desire and will. This uniqueness is seen in God's creation of man. He said, "*Let Us make man in **Our** image*" (Genesis 1:26). There is no suggestion of individuality to be found in this declaration. However, man's likeness of God is to be understood. That likeness is of the "us" and "our" not three separate likenesses, but a composite one God.

In man's salvation there was and is a singleness of purpose in God's work, but three actions. God the Father has purposed it, God the Son (Jesus Christ) paid the price for it, and God the Holy Spirit regenerates to newness of spiritual life all those that God the Father calls.

Jesus said, "*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him*" (John 6:44). The drawing of a person to the Son for salvation is God's purpose. The work of God the Son is found in His sacrifice as the purchase price for that salvation. The writer of Hebrews explains,

"¹For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ²For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.

⁴For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. ⁵Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. ⁶In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.’ ⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.’ ⁸Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law), ⁹then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second. ¹⁰By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 10:1-10).

Jesus informed Nicodemus (and us) that the work of the Holy Spirit is the regeneration of those whom the Father calls. He said, ¹“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.’ ³Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes

from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:1-8).

What a wondrous work of God. Without this work of our triune God none of us would ever be qualified to be in His holy presence. Paul, the apostle by inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote,

¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:1-10).

We, who are God’s children, are so because of His work on our behalf. He has called us out of spiritual darkness. He has regenerated in us a new spiritual life, and to qualify us for those benefits, God Himself paid the price by sacrificing His Son.

What a work! Thank you, Lord God.

What is Godly Repentance?

Throughout Scripture men are asked and are required to repent of their sins and turn to God, but what is repentance? Is it an emotion that originates in the heart of man or a mental determination that moves him toward God? Emotionalism alone cannot lead to true repentance because like the wind emotions are ever changing. They run hot, then cold. Emotions are often spurred to a fever pitch by great speeches, by tragedy or acts of love and may cause one to regret a particular action, but regret is not necessarily repentance. The same could be said of mental determination. One may regret a particular action but when the memory of that action fades so does his mental determination. He often finds himself involved in the same action(s) again. Godly repentance reaches further into the soul of man than a repentance that is merely regret. It is mitigated on both the emotion of the heart, mental determination, and is also a work of God.

Unregenerate (the spiritually dead) man is not capable of repentance. He must first be made spiritually alive. Jesus said that a person must be born from above before he can see (or even understand) heaven or enter into it; explaining that this is the work of God the Holy Spirit (John 3:1-8). The reason for this, Jesus said, is that “man loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil” (John 3:19). Also the Apostle Paul explained, “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). That repentance is sourced in God is further testified by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel,

Jeremiah 24:7 “Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart”....Ezekiel 36:26-27²⁶“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

These passages refer to the people of Israel, but are nonetheless applicable to all men. It is God who is the giver of a new heart. The Apostle Paul affirms this in his letter to the Galatians, who were not Israelites but Gentiles,

“¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.” (Ephesians 2:1-5).

As God moves upon the heart, the heart is softened. It becomes responsive to His testimony, and the solicitation of the Holy Spirit. Man finds within himself a desire to turn from that which is offensive to God to pleasing Him. Godly repentance results in a change of heart, a change of desire, and a change of direction. It is a turning **from** that which is of self **to** that which is of God.

All sin is offensive to God and it will be offensive to each one of us if we are truly repentant. We are not truly repentant if we still revel in the things of the flesh or worldly enticements. We cannot slander the Lord in word or deed and also be repentant.

Predestined or What?

In a recent sermon a preacher spoke of predestination. He said that some believe that all persons are either predestined to heaven or are predestined to hell. He also said that this is not what the Bible declares, nor was it his belief. As I listened to him speak, my thoughts ran to Paul's letter to the Christians in and around Rome and his letter to the Ephesians. From chapter eight of his letter to the Romans he wrote, "those who love God who are called according to His purpose are predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, His son." Beginning with verse 28 we read,

"²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

According to this passage, God does call some to Himself, justifying (and eventually glorifying) them in order that they become brethren of His Son, Jesus Christ. In their calling they have been **predestined** to be conformed to His image. God does call certain ones for this purpose, but does not automatically disqualify others. This is borne out by Paul's letter to the Ephesians. We read from chapter one of that letter,

"¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³Blessed be

the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. ⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. ¹¹In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹²that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. ¹³In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

Returning to the declaration of the preacher mentioned above, that the Bible does not teach, nor does he believe, that some are predestined to heaven and others are predestined to hell. We must conclude from Paul’s letter to the Romans and his letter to the Ephesians that God does predestine some people to heaven and calls them unto Himself to assure that their predestination is accomplished. It is also clear that others come to believe and trust in Jesus as their savior and are saved after they hear the Word of truth.

Thus, from our human perspective it cannot be assumed that some are predestined to hell since there is always the possibility that they will hear the word and believe. God has not shut the door to anyone except those who die in their sins.

God has predestined the saved, the born again person to heaven, and has predestined the unsaved to hell, but He does not predestine that a person not be saved. It should be understood that Scripture teaches that one must be born from above (born again) before he can see (understand) the kingdom of heaven or enter into it (John 3:1-8). Because God is a God of love, of mercy, and righteousness He has given a general call to all of humanity excluding none. The Gospels ring out, “Whosoever will, may come.” He does not prevent one from responding to His call. Believing and trusting in Jesus is the prerequisite to eternal life with the Father.

“God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16).

God's Unchanging Message

It is interesting that many people of our day cling to a religious persuasion that was engendered in their youth, even though many beliefs (doctrines) within this persuasion have changed over the years. Therefore, these beliefs most often reject the unchanging Word of God, the Bible. Why is this? Various reasons are given. Some have said it is because it was the religion of their family and if it was good enough for their family, it is good enough for them. Others hold to these persuasions because of friends or societal circles. Still others have come to believe there are no absolutes to which one can hold. Even the message of the Bible, they claim, needs to be adapted to an ever changing world.

The above mentioned persons should understand that God does not change nor has His message changed. It does not say one thing to some and something else to others. The Bible is His revelation of Himself, a record of man's separation from God, and God's work of restoration. Reject the truths of the Bible and a person will be eternally separated from Him. Accept its truths, and reconciliation and restoration are sure. The claim of the Bible in days gone by and in our present is that salvation (reconciliation and restoration) is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter speaking of the risen Lord said to the Jewish Sanhedrin and indirectly to us, *"¹²Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). Jesus Himself said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). The writer of Hebrews wrote, *"⁴For it is not possible that the*

blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. ⁵Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. ⁶ In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.’ ⁷Then I said, ‘behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God.’ Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law), ⁹then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second. ¹⁰By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”

How much clearer can this be? The message of the Bible is the unveiling of Holy God working on behalf of fallen mankind in restoring them to a righteous state, a state that qualifies them for heaven, forgiving and cleansing them of sin.

Thank you, Lord for your clear and precise message.

None Good but God

“¹⁶Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ ¹⁷So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ ¹⁸He said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ¹⁹‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ²⁰The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?’ ²¹Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ ²²But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” (Matthew 19:16-22).

Can a man truly be good, at least by the measurement required for him to have eternal life? That is, to have a right standing before the only One who is truly good? The young man of the text thought himself to be good. He at least believed that he had kept the Law of Moses, but when confronted with giving up his fortune his true nature was exposed. As it has always been, people look at the external and say of themselves, and of others, that people are basically good. In reality, to have a right standing before Holy God one must be righteous. However, the judgment of God is, *“¹¹There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. ¹²They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.”* (Romans 3:11-12). In context, the Apostle Paul is explaining to his readers that there is

none righteous, Jew or Gentile. Furthermore, there are none who are in themselves righteous. One must be made righteous. Unrighteousness comes from a wrong heart, a heart that is centered on self. Therefore it cannot be truly good because self always elevates itself above God, but God commanded that man is to worship Him and put no other gods before Him (Exodus 20:3). This includes self. If self is on the throne, God is not. In such a case, man has elevated himself above God and by God's judgment he is not good.

Jesus said, as He instructed His disciples, *"For I say unto you, that except you righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:20). The Scribes and Pharisees showed themselves to be righteous and holy, but inwardly they were dead toward God. Being right with Holy God is much more than an outward appearance, it is an inward transformation.

The Apostle Paul in his letter of instruction and encouragement to the Colossians wrote, *"¹If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. ⁵Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. ⁸But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy,*

filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, ¹¹where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. ¹²Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. ¹⁴But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:1-17).

There is much more that Paul imparted to these Colossian believers and by extension to us. The point is made in these verses that in reality there is nothing good in the natural man. Man needs to be transformed. Thanks to God that He has made this possible in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

How Does One Come to Have Saving Faith?

How does a person come to have saving faith? An important question for sure! Saving faith is against the nature of man. In the Garden of Eden Eve was led to believe that she and Adam would not die should they take of the forbidden fruit. Adam also bought into this deception (Genesis 3:1-6), shown when they both took of the forbidden fruit. The consequence was that they did die toward God and immediately they thought to cover their sense of guilt by their own invention (Genesis 3:7-10). From that time until the present, those who accept the existence of God have, by self-invention, tried to appease God. Satan, the deceiver of Genesis 3, is still about his diabolic work leading mankind to believe that they can find a right standing before God by self-effort. Scripture, God's Word, the Bible, emphatically says something quite different.

We read that in the Garden God did not accept Adam and Eve's invention, but by His own hands He made a way for them to continue to live physically for a time. He also provided the means by which they were restored spiritually (Genesis 3:21). His provision was and still is the provision which allows a term of physical life to all, and is the guarantor of spiritual restoration to those who turn from self-invention to Him. That extender of physical life and the guarantor of spiritual life is God Himself. John the Apostle, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us that God took upon Himself the flesh of man (John 1:14). The writer of Hebrews tells us why. His flesh (body) was sacrificed to satisfy the justice of God (Hebrews 10: 1-18). The blood of the animal shed to obtain the skin to cover Adam and Eve's shame (sin) looked forward to God's sacrifice of Himself and is applicable to all who turn to Him.

This is all well and good some might say, but what has to happen that I might believe this, that I might come to have saving faith? There are two sides to the answer. John was led to write, “God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting (spiritual) life” ...and rebirths new spiritual life in those who turn to Him (John 3:16; John 3:3-8). This is God’s side. Man on the other hand is to seek after Him. A clear understanding of the Gospel is essential for a person to believe and receive the good news of Jesus Christ. His death on the cross was the only sacrifice required to remove our sins, but such an understanding does not come apart from the Scriptures. This means a required, committed, and diligent search (study).

Secondly, a definite decision must be made; a decision of forsaking self-effort (self-invention) to accepting and committing to God’s provision, Jesus Christ. Believing about Jesus Christ is not enough. A believing in and committing to Him is the saving factor; a believing in and commitment that produces action. A man or woman of faith chooses to surrender to Christ, embraces the Word of God, and lives fully for the Lord. True believers will put self desires aside to follow and serve the Lord. Jesus said, *“³⁷He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”* (Matthew 10:37-39 NKJV).

There are many today that believe they have saving faith, but relegate Jesus to the back seat, so to speak. However, Jesus said that unless He has preeminence in one’s life, one is not a true follower.

James, having come to saving faith himself was led to write, “²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does....¹⁴What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? ¹⁷Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (James 1:22-25...2:14-18 NKJV).

Saving faith produces action. In truth, saving faith is God’s work in and through us. The Apostle Paul wrote, “We are His (God’s) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10 NKJV).

It is quite possible that where there are no works, there is no Spirit.

God's Gift of His Spirit

In a recent discussion with a Roman Catholic friend concerning a person having a relationship with God and what is expected of him, the person of the Holy Spirit came up. Specifically, the discussion was about God's role in the life of the believer. I suggested that God gives us His Spirit at the time of our salvation to indwell and aid us in our walk. To which he replied, "I have always had the Holy Spirit." Silently, I wondered about this. My friend went on, "I have always had thoughts about God and have tried to conduct myself according those thoughts." I commended him and suggested that perhaps this was and is truly the work of the Holy Spirit. However, I reminded him that according to Jesus one must be born again to see or understand and enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:1-8). His belief is that he was born again when he was baptized.

During the 24 hours that followed, I prayerfully pondered his claim and wondered why he believes as he does. This pondering led me to a website on Catholic Faith and Reason, an association of lay Catholics and I found the following:

"The Holy Spirit is the sanctifier, who was sent by the Father and Son to complete the work of the Son. He makes 'holy.' As Pope John Paul II has written, 'Having accomplished the work that the Father had entrusted to the Son on earth (John 17:4), on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was sent to sanctify the Church for ever, so that believers might have access to the Father through Christ in one Spirit' (Ephesians 2: 18). The Church has always taught that we receive the Holy Spirit through the sacrament (a sharing in the life of God; an outward sign that produces grace in us) of Baptism. The

waters of Baptism signify the cleansing of our soul of original sin [which all humans inherit from Adam and Eve, our first parents]. St. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, tells us that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit in our baptism. This reality is signified by the holy oil which is traced on the forehead of the person being baptized in the form of a cross. The sacrament imparts an indelible character. God's life comes to us and makes us 'children of God' and 'heirs with Christ.' St. Peter makes the comparison to the waters which saved Noah from physical death, proclaiming that in the spiritual realm of our soul, 'baptism now saves you' (1 Peter 3:21). The Spirit also imparts the gifts of faith, hope and charity, enabling us to grow in our relationship with God and with one another."

Is this a correct understanding of what the Bible teaches, i.e. First Peter 3:21? This is an important question because to be wrong about being a child of God and having always had the Holy Spirit may lead to an eternal separation from God. The Bible, after all, specifically teaches that there is none righteous, there is none that understands or seeks after God (see Romans 3:10-11); that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (see Romans 3:23); and that the wages of sin is death (see Romans 6:23). Please note, "that there is none righteous, there is none that understands or seeks after God" are in the present tense. How can this be possible if the baptism referred to has imparted the indelible character of God? This is not to say that any of us is without sin, for we all sin, but such sinning would be and is against that imparted character. If in fact that character is imparted by the sacrament. Yet, many of those who supposedly have been imparted with the character of God (presumably implied in water baptism) live according to the dictates of their flesh not by the

leading of the Holy Spirit, whom they supposedly received when they were baptized. Isn't the world riddled with "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like" as seen in Galatians 5:19-21(NKJV)? Who is it that does these things? Are not much of these things done by many of those who have been baptized and have been given the character of God and the Holy Spirit, according to their profession? It can't be so. Water baptism may clean the body, but it cannot clean the inward man. The inward man is cleansed by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). Jesus said of the Eleven, "Now you are clean, through the Word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). It is the Word of God, delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit that convinces convicts and regenerates man to new spiritual life.

Water baptism is simply a testimony of the inward cleansing by the Holy Spirit. The inward cleansing comes when a person understands that he is a sinner and in need of God's mercy and turns to Jesus for his or her salvation. Such an understanding can only come when a person has reached an age of rationality. Paul wrote, *"¹Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. ⁵For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man*

who does those things shall live by them.’ ⁶But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, ‘Do not say in your heart,’ ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down from above) ⁷or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’ ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’ ¹⁴How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’ ¹⁶But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘LORD, who has believed our report?’ ¹⁷So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:1-17).

And in another letter, Paul wrote, “¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the

mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:1-10 NKJV).

My friend and his fellow companions may have the Holy Spirit, but according to the Apostle Paul, if they do, they did not receive Him when baptized as an infant, but when God in His mercy moved upon and in their hearts regenerating them to newness of Spiritual life. The timing of this according to Paul was at a point in time when they were able to hear and understand the message of salvation.

May God be praised!

Saved to Worship

A benefit of our salvation is that we escape eternal condemnation and Hell, but we also are saved (are born again) so that we can worship God. Adam's sin separated him from God and it separates all persons from God. God dealt with Adam's sin and restored him to a righteous state. God deals with the sin of all those He saves, restoring them to a righteous state. His purpose in this was that Adam could experience His presence and worship Him. This is His purpose of all those whom He calls unto Himself, of every generation.

True worship of God, and the only worship that is acceptable by Him, is produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit and expressed by the lips of those who have been made right with Him. The woman that Jesus dealt with at Jacob's well affirms this truth. The woman was a Samaritan and not knowing Jehovah God she worshipped the gods of her fathers, the gods of the Assyrians, but Jesus said unto her, ²¹*Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.* ²²*You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.* ²³*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.* ²⁴*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*" (John 4:21-24 NKJV). Earlier, in a conversation with Nicodemus (a Jewish religious leader), Jesus said that a person must be born again to see the kingdom of heaven. In essence, a person must be born again to know God (John 3:3). The Apostle Paul wrote that *"the natural (the unregenerate) man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* (1 Corinthians 2:14 NKJV).

God wants to be known by man. He wants to be experienced by man. This is only possible when a man has been regenerated spiritually. In this present experience of life the glory of God can only be known by regenerate (by spiritually alive) persons. To know God's glory is to worship Him. Worship of God makes Him not only Savior to the one who is worshipping Him, but also Lord. A worship of God that accepts Him as Savior, but denies Him as Lord (as the authority of one's life) is not true worship and is not acceptable to Him.

Jesus said, ²³*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.* ²⁴*He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me"* (John 14:23-24 NKJV). The apostle John wrote; ³*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.* ⁴*He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* ⁵*But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.* ⁶*He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."* (1 John 2:3-6 NKJV).

True worship is Holy Spirit generated, and is a worship that acknowledges Sovereign Holy God as Sovereign Holy God; worthy of the praise and obedience by those who worship Him.

About the Author

It was by the grace of God that Steve was brought to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was by God's longsuffering that he has been sustained in that faith.

Steve became a Christian on November 7, 1961 when as a young marine on liberty he came upon a street meeting held by Open Air Campaigners for Christ in the city of Los Angeles, California. For the remaining three years of his enlistment after coming to faith, Steve immersed himself in various books and studies concerning his relationship with Christ.

During those three years he worshipped at Granada Heights Friends Church in La Mirada, CA on Sunday mornings and the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles, CA in the evenings. Steve was encouraged by three families who were members of Granada Heights Friends Church and nurtured his faith. To these three families he will forever be grateful.

Those three years were a tremendous blessing to Steve. It was the foundation gained in those years that sustained him through several tumultuous years during which he walked away from a faithful walk with the Lord and lived as a prodigal son. But thanks to God, Steve was still a son. Like the prodigal of Luke 15:8-22, he was never disowned by the Father. In 1985, after living a life of riotousness that almost destroyed him, Steve surrendered to the authority of God and has since been in the service of his Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ.

Steve readily acknowledges that it was and is only the grace of God that allowed him to remain alive during those years and by God's

love that Steve was brought back to fellowship with Him. This grace and love, Steve believes, is best spoken of in Romans 8:28-29. *“And we know that all good things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose. 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 who he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”*

It is confirmed in this passage that each child of God is being conformed (being changed) to the image of Jesus Christ. First, however, God calls that person out of the world into a loving relationship with Himself, making him a son. He justifies that person so that they may have fellowship one with other and also that justification makes it possible for him to eventually be in the very presence of God.