

BUT GROW IN GRACE

CHAPTER ONE

Three Stages of Christian Growth

As we begin these lessons on “Grow in Grace” we make no claim of them being of a deep theological nature that covers every aspect of the Christian walk. These lessons are given to help new Believers begin their walk, and continue their Christian walk.

In this series of lessons we will be looking at six Bible facts that may be of help as you grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- (1) How you can make sure you are on the right road.
- (2) How you may have full confidence in the road map, the Bible.
- (3) Belief in the Deity of Jesus Christ, is a “must.”
- (4) Understanding what the Bible means concerning the new birth.
- (5) It will help greatly to have an understanding of the two natures; the old nature which is born of the flesh, and the new nature which is born of the Spirit.
- (6) It is very important to see the difference between the Scriptures that show Salvation as a FREE gift and those that show rewards for service.

In this series of lessons we will be covering in detail what the Bible has to say on each of these subjects.

There are three well defined stages in this spiritual growth. First, we must note that no new Believer begins their Christian walk as a full mature Christian. The apostle John addresses all three stages of this spiritual growth in his first epistle.

“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.” (I John 2:13)

In these Scriptures the apostle John refers to the three stages of growth as:

- (1) Little Children.

Little children represent the new Believer whose diet is “milk” and must be fed by others. This same group of Believers is referred to in I Peter 2:2 as “newborn babes.”

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” (I Peter 2:2)

The second stage of our spiritual walk is referred to as:

- (2) Young Men.

Young men represent those who have grown enough in the Word whereby they are able to feed themselves. This is accomplished by those who have followed the instructions in II Peter 3:18.

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” (II Peter 3:18)

The third stage of our spiritual walk (I John 2:13) is referred to as:

(3) Fathers.

“Fathers” represent the mature Believer who is not only able to feed on the strong meat of the Word, but who are able to teach others as well. These, of course, are the ones who are following the instructions given by Paul in II Timothy 2:15.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (II Timothy 2:15)

As we shall see, there are no short cuts to spiritual maturity. Progress will come only from a knowledge and obedience to the Word of God.

Here again are the special instructions given that pertain to each stage of our Christian growth.

To “little children” the Scripture says, **“As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” (I Peter 2:2)**

To “young men” the Scripture says, **“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (II Peter 3:18)**

To “fathers” the Scripture says, **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (II Timothy 2:15)**

All three of these Scriptures concur on one point. Spiritual growth is only possible through the study of the Word of God.

We come now to the very heart of our study. Six times in Ephesians chapters two, four and five, the Believer’s life and conduct is referred to as “a continual walk.”

The Bible portrays this life as a journey. In this journey there are only two roads set before us in Scripture, one called a “wide road” and the other a “narrow road.” Every person on this earth is traveling one of these roads. The Bible is crystal clear as to the entrance to the road that leads to eternal life.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it,” (Matthew 7:13, 14)

It is very important to make sure you are on the right road. The only way to get on this “narrow road” is to enter by the “strait gate.” The gate you enter will determine your eternal destiny. The Bible records in plain language that the entrance to the “narrow way” is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and is the only way to God and Heaven. Any other way is called the “wide” gate that puts you on the broad road to destruction. Therefore there is nothing more important than to make sure you have entered the way of the “strait gate.”

This brings us to the first step, and the most important step you will ever take in your journey. What does the Bible mean when it speaks of the “strait gate” and the “narrow way?” How may one be sure that they have entered the correct gate?

Step # One, “the narrow road.”

The first step taken is to be on the narrow way. You must make absolutely sure you have entered the “strait” or “narrow” gate. The following Scripture makes it plain that this “gate” is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

**“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
(John 14:6)**

This Scripture verse alone gives us a clear answer as to the entrance to the narrow gate; however, there are four more verses that leave no room for doubt.

“Verily, verily I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.” (John 10:1)

“Then Jesus said unto them again. Verily, verily I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.” (John 10:7)

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (I Timothy 2:5)

With the road map so clearly marked, with plain and simple instructions, if you should try some other gate you will be without excuse. To reject the “strait gate” means you automatically enter the wide gate that leads to the broad road of destruction; and here is where you will find yourself “in that day.”

**“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.
Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7:21-23)**

From this verse we see that the broad road is the road of religious works. “...in thy name done many wonderful works.” Compare this with the “narrow” road.

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of

regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Titus 3:5)

**“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8, 9)**

**“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”
(Revelation 22:17)**

When we understand WHO the gate is (not ‘what’ the gate is), we then need to understand what we must do to enter the gate. Here again the Word of God is plain and simple as to what one must do to enter the “narrow gate.” The instructions are so plain that to miss this sign is to ignore all of the warnings posted. The Word of God plainly says:

**“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”
(Romans 10:9, 10)**

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:12)

Before a person is saved, the Bible says they are walking in darkness; but receiving the Lord Jesus as Saviour changes their walk completely.

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (I Peter 2:9)

Now, in Christ, as you walk, every step can be illuminated by the marvelous light of the Word of God. **“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.” (Psalm 119:130)**

God has already prepared a well-lighted path for all who believe.

**“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:5, 6)**

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.” (Psalm 37:23)

It is only when we walk in the path God has prepared for us that we will be entitled to all of the rights and the privileges promised by the Father. When we leave this path and “lean unto our own understanding” we forfeit all rights to the blessings that are ours. Like the prodigal son in the pig-pen, he did not lose his son-ship; however, he lost all of his rights and privileges as a son.

We close this first lesson with some important instructions from the Word of God.

“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.” (I Thessalonians 4:1)

CHAPTER TWO

Walk Worthy

The word “walk” is used a number of times to describe a Believer as it relates to their conduct and obedience to the Word of God. The word “walk” also denotes progress in a certain direction. Colossians chapter one, verse ten sets the order of this walk. Please note, “and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” (Colossians 1:10)

We saw in our previous lesson that one can only walk “pleasing” and “be fruitful” by the “knowledge of God.” There is only one source where this knowledge of God may be found, and that is the Bible, the inspired, infallible Word of God.

To increase our knowledge of God there must be a starting point. There is no better place to start than to come to an understanding of some of the important basic fundamental Bible themes.

Step #2: You must believe in the divine authorship of the Word of God.

If you are a Believer this step should not be difficult at all, for it will have to be accepted by faith, the same as salvation. You must have full confidence in the road map, the Bible. You must accept the Word of God as absolutely infallible, inspired, and perfect in every detail with which it deals.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (II Timothy 3:16)

**“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; where-
unto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that
shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the
day star arise in your hearts:
Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture**

**is of any private interpretation.
For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of
man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved
by the Holy Ghost.” (II Peter 1:19-21)**

Faith in the Word of God begins with the very first verse of the Bible. Here is all that God has to say on the matter. **“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)** He offers no explanation of “how” or “why.” Even if God explained in detail, man with his finite ability still would not be able to comprehend.

**“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the
evidence of things not seen.
For by it the elders obtained a good report.
Through faith we understand that the worlds were
framed by the word of God, so that things which are
seen were not made of things which do appear.”
(Hebrews 11:1-3)**

If you sincerely believe the very first verse of the Bible, you will have no trouble believing the rest of the Bible. The child of God needs no explanation. The Word of God alone is sufficient.

Step # 3: The Lord Jesus Christ, THE Son of God.

In II Peter chapter three, verse eighteen, we read, **“But grow in grace, and in the KNOWLEDGE of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”**

The very first thing that you must understand about Jesus Christ is that He is who He claims to be, THE Son of God. This is very important. Either He is THE Son of God, as the Bible teaches, or He was only ‘a’ son of God, as the world and the false prophets teach. If you believe the latter there is no hope of salvation. What you believe about Jesus Christ will determine your destiny.

The questions ask by our Lord in Matthew chapter twenty two, verse forty two must be answered correctly if you are to be saved. “What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?”

**“I say therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your
sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die
in your sins.” (John 8:24)**

Again Jesus asked this same question, **“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Matthew 16:13)** It does not matter what the world believes, however, it makes a great deal of difference what you believe for salvation.

This is a personal question that you must answer, just as Peter had to give an answer.

**“And Simon Peter answered, and said, Thou art the
Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16)**

This truth was not revealed to Peter by human reasoning.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art

thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 16:17)

Human reasoning sees Jesus Christ as only “a” son of God. If this were true, Jesus would need a Saviour just like you and I. This is why human reasoning cannot understand the preexistence of Christ, His supernatural conception, His unique birth or the necessity of His resurrection.

There is a vast difference in believing that Jesus Christ IS come in the flesh and Jesus Christ “has” come in the flesh. This is the way we may know the difference between the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. This difference separates the false prophets from the true.

**“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:
And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”
(I John 4:2, 3)**

“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us, Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” (I John 4:6)

To believe that Jesus Christ IS come in the flesh means that HE IS ALIVE TODAY! However, if one only believes that Jesus “has” come in the flesh this would mean that He is no longer alive today. This may not seem important to some, but it is very important to every person who is born again; for if Jesus Christ is not alive today there is no salvation.

Step #4: An understanding of what takes place when one is “born again” is very important.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:6)

There are two births mentioned in this Scripture verse; one, “born of the flesh” and one, “born of the Spirit.” First, we look at what Jesus meant by “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Jesus is talking about the human sinful nature we inherited from our father Adam. By our first birth, born of the flesh, Jesus is referring to our physical birth.

“Wherefore, 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.” (Romans 5:12)

The Psalmist says:

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalm 51:5)

“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.” (Psalm 58:3)

Our human nature is so corrupt and defiled that God makes no attempt to make it over, or change it in any way. It is man who attempts to change human nature by reform, education, training and even legislation. All of man’s efforts have ended in failure. Why?

“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” (Jeremiah 13:23)

We shall see in our next lesson that even God makes no attempt to remake this old nature we inherited from our father Adam. If God is unable to change this old corruptible nature, what chance does man have in changing it?

You see, man is not sick, he is dead, and proper care, the right environment, education or rehabilitation will not make him fit for the Kingdom of God. The Scripture tells us in Ephesians 2:1 that man is dead. **“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”** This same truth is repeated in Colossians 2:13.

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” (Colossians 2:13)

No, man does not have a spark of life that only needs to be fanned until it becomes a flame; man is spiritually dead, and therefore needs life. The Word of God makes it crystal clear as to the only source of this life that will be acceptable with God.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” (I John 5:11)

This “life” is not a make-over of the flesh. This life is a PERSON.

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (I John 5: 12)

The old nature did not develop over time. There is evidence that it starts at birth and only gets worse. A failure to recognize this fact hinders many from coming to Christ for salvation. As long as a person thinks there is a spark of life, and all it takes is to fan that spark so that one day it will become a flame, they will never see their need of the Saviour.

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

A person must realize their lost condition before they can be saved.

“And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eatest your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”
(Matthew 9:10-13)

If you are not saved, you need to see your need for the Saviour just like the Publican in Luke 18:13 who said, “...God be merciful to me a sinner,” and the thief on a cross in Luke 23:41, “**And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward for our deeds,**” or the prodigal son in Luke 15:18, “**I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.**”

Until you see your need for a Saviour you will never receive that Saviour.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:12)

CHAPTER THREE

The Flesh or the Spirit

In our previous lesson we asked what Jesus was talking about when He said in John 3:6 “**That which is born of flesh, is flesh.**” We saw also how we came into possession of this old sinful nature; that it was inherited from our father Adam.

In this lesson we will continue the subject introduced in the previous lesson, where we showed that God makes no attempt to remake, reform or rearrange the old nature, because “that which is born of the flesh, is flesh,” and will never be anything but flesh.

In this lesson we will answer a very important question concerning this old nature, called in the New Testament “the natural man,” (I Corinthians 2:14). In Romans 6:6, Ephesians 4:22 and Colossians 3:9 it is called “the old man.” In I Corinthians 5:7 it is called “the old leaven.” In I Corinthians 3:1-4 the word “carnal” is used. However, the word used most often in the New Testament to identify the old nature is the word “flesh.” Whether it is called “the natural man,” the old man,” “old leaven,” or the “flesh,” they mean one and the same thing, “human nature.”

What happens to this old human nature, the flesh, when one is born again may best be answered by posing two questions, and then let the Bible answer both questions.

First, is the old nature still present within the Believer when one is born of the

Spirit, or is it replaced entirely by the new nature? This question is answered in a number of Scripture passages, however none more clearly than in I Corinthians 3:1-4.

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?” (I Corinthians 3:1-4)

First, Paul calls them “carnal,” and then “babes in Christ.” The word “carnal” which refers to the old nature, “are ye not carnal and walk as men,” shows that the old sinful nature was still present in these Corinthian Believers. I Corinthians chapter 1, verse 2, leaves no room for doubt that these Corinthians were Believers.

“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” (I Corinthians 1:2)

Of what human fleshly act were these Believers guilty that caused the “envy, strife and division” that prevented their spiritual growth, and caused Paul to call them “carnal” and “babes in Christ?”

“Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.” (I Corinthians 1:12)

Their spiritual growth was put on hold while they argued and debated over, of all things, who had the authority to baptize. They had left their true calling.

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none affect.” (I Corinthians 1:17)

This same group of people are described in I Timothy 6:4: **“He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings.”** “Doting” means to “harp upon.”

There are Believers who have put their ministry of teaching and preaching the Word of God on hold; thereby making the Cross of Christ of none effect by spending their time “harping” on words and splitting hairs over some pet doctrine, instead of preaching the gospel. Some leave their ministry and enter politics, or some environmental or reformation group instead of devoting their time to preaching the gospel. They devote all of their time and resources in trying to reform the world, not convert the world. We must never forget that the commission to the Believer is made very plain in Mark 16:15 and Acts 1:8.

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth,” (Acts 1:8)

Then, too, if the old nature is not present, where does the temptation to lust come from? The Scriptures say:

**“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”
(Galatians 5:16, 17)**

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.” (Romans 8:5)

We have shown from the Word of God the undeniable proof that the old Adamic nature is still present when a person is born again.

The second question is, before one can stand perfect before God must this old nature be eradicated, both root and branch? How many of us, when first saved, looked forward to the day when we would reach a spiritual state of having overcome the old nature? We looked forward to a time when we would not have the struggle and conflict anymore. However, the more we found out about the old nature, the more difficult the conflict became. To answer this question we turn to Romans 7:15-25.

**“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.
If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the the law that it is good.
Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.
For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.
Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.
For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:
But I see another law in my members, warring against**

**the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity
to the law of sin which is in my members.
O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from
the body of this death?
I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then
with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with
the flesh the law of sin.” (Romans 7:15-25)**

So, after having been saved some twenty six years Paul says his old nature was still present. Paul makes nine revealing statements concerning the old nature. He, speaking in the present tense, says:

- (1) **“...I am carnal, sold under sin.” (v. 14)**
- (2) **“...It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” (v. 17)**
- (3) **“For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” (v. 18)**
- (4) **“...but the evil which I would not, that I do.” (v.19)**
- (5) **“...but sin that dwelleth in me.” (v.20)**
- (6) **“...when I would do good, evil is present with me.” (v.21)**
- (7) **“...the law of sin which is in my members.” (v.23)**
- (8) **“O wretched man that I am.” (v.24)**
- (9) **“...but with the flesh the law of sin.” (v.25)**

As we have seen, the old nature was present and active in the Corinthian Believers. Paul, too, after having been saved some twenty-six years, recognized the presence of the old nature.

If it were true that the old nature must be eradicated completely, God would have certainly set some kind of time limit for the Believer to reach the state of total perfection in the flesh.

For absolute, undeniable Bible proof that the old nature is still present in the Believer as long as the flesh is alive, we turn to I John 1:8-10. These words were written by the apostle John after he had been following the Lord for some 59 years.

**“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and
the truth is not in us.
If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us
our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar,
and his word is not in us.” (I John 1:8-10)**

To say that the apostle John was writing editorially or in an allegorical manner is missing the message completely. The all inclusive words “we,” “our,” “ourselves” and “us,” are used fourteen times in these three verses. The words we, ourselves and us are defined in the dictionary as including oneself, another, or others.

To say that verses 8 and 10 refer to the unsaved, and verse 9 refers to the saved is to violate every practical rule of Bible interpretation.

To deny the fact of the presence of the old nature in the Believer, God says “you are deceiving yourself, and the truth is not in you.” If we take this verse just as it is written we have no trouble, for it is in complete harmony with I John 3:9, which is speaking of the new nature. This we will take up in our next lesson.

We close this lesson with a word of warning. The old nature is also capable of manifesting itself in a self-righteous manner. God views all of our religious works of the flesh the same as He does base sinful acts. In Isaiah 64:6 He calls “our righteousness” filthy rags.

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isaiah 64:6)

In Matthew 7:23 God calls self-righteousness “iniquity.”

“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7:23)

In Matthew 23:27 He calls the self-righteous “like unto whited sepulchres full of dead men’s bones.”

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.” (Matthew 23:27)

God will only accept the “righteousness” which He has provided, and this righteousness is in His Son.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (I John 5:11, 12)

CHAPTER FOUR

The New Nature

John chapter three tells us that we must be “born again.” This is the first time “born again” is mentioned in Scripture.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

This Scripture (verse 3) tells us that unless we are “born again” we cannot “see” the Kingdom of God. John 3:5 tells us that without the new birth we cannot “enter” the kingdom of God. Also, in verse five, Jesus tells us how this birth takes place.

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a

man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5)

In verse six He tells us why this birth is necessary. We were born wrong the first time, born in sin.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:6)

We covered the first part of this statement in our previous lesson, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and we saw that our Lord was referring to our first birth where we inherited the sinful flesh from our father Adam. We also saw that this flesh will always be flesh whether religious or non-religious.

In this lesson we take up the last part of this Scripture “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” We will do this by taking another look at verse five, where Jesus says **“Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”**

We saw in our previous lesson that the New Testament uses different terms to describe the old Adamic nature. Different terms are also used to describe the “new nature” as well. In II Corinthians 5:17 the new nature is called a “new creature,” or creation. In Romans 7:22 and II Corinthians 4:16 the new nature is called “the inward man.” In I Corinthians 15:45 it is called “the last Adam” and “a quickening spirit.” The new nature is called in I Peter 1:23 “the incorruptible seed,” and in I John 3:9 is it called “the seed that cannot sin.”

Jesus told Nicodemus that the divine transaction of being born again is accomplished by two things, the water and the Spirit. Almost all are agreed as to what is meant by the Spirit in this verse. However, all are not agreed on what is meant by the water.

The mystery as to the meaning of the word “water” in John 3:5 is not all that great. Water, in the Bible, has three symbolic meanings. When used in large quantities, such as the flood in Noah’s day, it speaks of judgment. Water, when used for drinking refers to the Holy Spirit. The following Scriptures make this very plain.

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:37, 38)

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

(Revelation 22:17)

Water for cleansing symbolizes the Word of God. Paul, speaking of Christ’s relationship to the Church says:

“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” (Ephesians 5:26)

The Scriptures teach that the Word is the means by which God sanctifies and cleanses the Believer. This verse alone makes a clear statement as to what the water means in John 3:5. Yet there is more. Jesus, speaking to His disciples, says **“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” (John 15:3)** Here again, the Word of God is the cleansing agent. The Word, then, is a vital part in God’s plan of redemption. Paul, referring to the new birth, calls it **“the washing of regeneration.”**

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Titus 3:5)

All Scripture dealing with the divine transaction of the regenerating process is called a “washing.” This washing is accomplished by the Word of God. We have a clear meaning of the water in I Peter 1:23.

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” (I Peter 1:23)

The second element in God’s plan of redemption is the human instrument. We see how important this human element becomes when we read:

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (I Corinthians 2:14)

The natural man is unable to investigate, or discern the truth of God’s Word. This is where the ministry of the Believer comes in.

“How 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?” (Romans 10:14)

The answer to all three questions is simple. They cannot call on him of whom they have not believed. They cannot believe in him of whom they have not heard, and they cannot hear without a preacher. This, then, becomes the sole responsibility of the Believer.

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (I Corinthians 1:21)

That is exactly what we are trying to do. We are trying to publish the Word of God, or sow the seed, so that people may hear and believe. The Word of God must be delivered for one to hear and be saved.

Philip, talking to the Ethiopian eunuch, says, **“Understandeth thou what thou readest?”** The Ethiopian eunuch replied, **“How can I, except some man should guide me?”** (Acts 8:30, 31). Then in verse 35 we read, **“Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”**

The third element in God’s plan of redemption is the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the vital element of salvation. This process is called regeneration.

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”
(Titus 3:5)

Regeneration means a “spiritual rebirth.” When anyone receives the Lord Jesus as Saviour that is exactly what takes place. The Holy Spirit places the Believer into the body of Christ. This truth cannot be made more plainly than in Paul’s writing to the Corinthians and to the Ephesians.

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (I Corinthians 12:13)

“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (Ephesians 5:30)

Also the Scripture, II Peter 1:4, tells us:

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”
(II Peter 1:4)

Believers become “partakers of the DIVINE NATURE.” This divine nature is the very nature of the Son of God.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (I John 5:11, 12)

The new birth takes place when the Holy Spirit places the Believer into the Body of Christ. They then become a “new creation.”

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (II Corinthians 5:17)

This is how we receive the new sinless nature. God does not change or replace the nature born of Adam, but places along side it a new sinless nature, the very nature of Christ. The Believer has both the old and the new nature present at the same time.

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” (I John 3:9)

We saw, in an earlier lesson, that the old nature knows nothing but sin. There is nothing the old nature can do, whether religious or non-religious that can please God.

In first John 3:9 we see that the Believer possesses a nature that cannot sin. The word “cannot” in this verse means that it is not possible for this “seed” to sin. The first part of this verse tells us that **“whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,”** (practice or perform sin repeatedly.) This is exactly what Galatians 5:21b says. **“...as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”** Anyone who claims to be a “sheep” and finds a home in the pig-pen is not a “sheep” but a pig disguised as a sheep.

However, the second part of this verse tells a different story. It gives the reason why a Believer will not have the desire to practice sin. **“...for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”** There is a part of the Believer which cannot sin. It is “the seed that cannot sin.”

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (I Peter 1:23)

Salvation is based upon this “incorruptible seed,” the Lord Jesus Christ, and not upon the corruptible seed of Adam. The lesson here is plain. We do not abstain from sin to be saved, but because we are saved.

Before we close this lesson I would like to give the three most prominent reasons why some who profess to be saved pursue their good works. They do so either:

- (1) To be saved.
- (2) To be kept saved.

There is no difference between the ones who believe “in works to be saved” and the ones who believe “they must work to be kept saved.” Both are saying the same thing, “that God is not quite able to save them by Himself and therefore needs some assistance. They are saying that “His grace alone is not sufficient enough to save.”

We have given the first two reasons why some pursue good works. We come now to another reason.

- (3) Those that pursue good works because they are saved.

We can best illustrate this truth by applying the divine rule of mathematics. In I Corinthians 3:5, Paul asks a question, **“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?”** In verse six he answers the question, **“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”**

Then in verse seven he places the value in God's great plan of redemption. **“So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”**

The Scriptures are telling us that none of us are anything without God. GOD IS THE ONE! Paul tells us that he and Apollos, without God, are nothing --- zero. We all know that zero plus zero equals zero. No matter how many zeros you have they still add up to zero. You need a number with these zeros if they are to add up to anything, and Paul gives us that number. “...but God giveth the increase.” God, then, becomes the ONE. It is only when the zero is placed along side the ONE that the zero becomes something; and its value is determined by which side of the one the zero is placed.

If you are working for your salvation, or to keep your salvation, you would naturally be placed on the left side of the “one” and therefore diminish the importance of the ONE. However, if you are working and walking to please the ONE because you are saved, by putting the ONE first and the zero following, it increases the value and honor of the ONE, so that you become something. The more zero's following the one increases the value.

We do not work to be saved; we work because we are saved. You must first have a light before that light can shine.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

CHAPTER FIVE

Salvation and Rewards

In our final lesson on “But Grow in Grace” we are going to deal with a subject that should put to rest the question “Are works necessary for one to be saved?”

As you read the New Testament you will soon learn that the Word of God contains two offers. It is very important that we have a clear understanding of these two lines of Bible revelation. Failure to understand the truths of these two offers will cause one to continue to wallow in a quagmire of confusion; confusing works for salvation instead of accepting salvation as a FREE GIFT. This confusion comes from a lack of understanding the difference between the promise offered as a “free gift” to those who are lost, and the promise offered to those who are saved as a “reward for faithful service.”

By paying close attention to the Scriptures, the distinction between these two lines of revelation may easily be seen. I believe we can best see this truth by contrasting those Scriptures that speak of a “free salvation” offered to the lost, and “rewards offered” to the saved for faithful service. In order to do this we ask you to bear with us as we will be quoting a number of Scriptures, rather than just giving the references.

A good place to start is by applying a good rule of Bible study, the “rule of first mention.” There is no better place to start than when this truth was first presented in Matthew 11:28.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

Up until this time the message was to the Jews only. This is the first time in the New Testament that Jesus offered salvation to all. Not only was it offered to all, it was offered as a “gift.” **“I will give you rest.”**

In the next verse our Lord makes the second offer. **“Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.”** This yoke is offered only to those who have received the “free gift of salvation.” If you have not received the “gift of rest” the “yoke” does not apply to you at all.

A yoke means servitude or obligation. The yoke is not the yoke of salvation, but one of servitude because one has received the gift of salvation. We begin by carefully observing the following contrast.

(1) Salvation is always spoken of as a FREE GIFT.

“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” (Romans 5:15-18)

In these four verses, all referring to salvation, the word “gift” is used no less than six times. The word “gift” is used four times and the words “free gift” is used twice. No further evidence is needed to show that salvation is offered as a “free gift.” However, for added proof we read the following verses.

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” (John 10:28)

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” (II Corinthians 9:15)

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8, 9)

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Revelation 22:17)

By comparing these Scriptures that speak of salvation offered as a “free gift” with the ones offered for “rewards for faithful service” we begin with Matthew 10:42.

“And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:42)

“And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.” (Luke 19:17)

**“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.
And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.” (I Corinthians 9:24, 25)**

**“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;
Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.
If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.
If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” (I Corinthians 3:11-15)**

We can readily see the difference between salvation and rewards by making a second contrast, noting that salvation is always spoken of as being:

(2) A PRESENT POSSESSION.

“And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” (Luke 7:50)

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:36)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” (John 6:47)

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” II Timothy 1:9)

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” (I John 5:11)

By contrast we see that the Scriptures present salvation as a “PRESENT POSSESSION,” while the Scriptures present rewards to be received at SOME FUTURE DATE.

“And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” (Luke 14:14)

“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” (I Timothy 4:8)

“Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:24)

“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (I Peter 5:4)

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” (Matthew 16:27)

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Revelation 22:12)

I realize we have given a number of Scriptures in this lesson. Since all of our lessons are printed in booklet form, and also posted on the Inter-Net in a printer friendly format, (as well as audio), we feel that many who order the booklets, or down-load the

print version, are more likely to read the Scriptures if they are presented in this format, rather than having to take the time to search for them.