

The New Birth

Series 1-10

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries





Copyright

The New Birth: What It Means to Be Born Again

A Complete Ten-Part VerseQuest Essay Series

Copyright © 2026 VerseQuest Ministries

All rights reserved.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, republished, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—including electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission from VerseQuest Ministries, except for brief quotations used in reviews, teaching references, or scholarly discussion.

Scripture quotations are taken exclusively from the **King James Bible**.

This publication is intended for personal Bible study, doctrinal instruction, teaching, research, and reference. It may not be altered, resold, repackaged, or represented as the work of another individual or ministry.

Published by **VerseQuest Ministries**

First Edition, 2026

Printed in the United States of America

VerseQuest Ministries

Searching the Scriptures. Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth.

Table of Contents

Introduction — The New Birth: What It Means to Be Born Again

1 of 10 — The New Birth — The Birth Your Mother Could Never Give You

2 of 10 — The New Birth — A Spiritual Corpse in a Sunday Suit

3 of 10 — The New Birth — When God Commands the Dead to Live

4 of 10 — The New Birth — The Seed That Cannot Rot

5 of 10 — The New Birth — God Does Not Repair the Old Man

6 of 10 — The New Birth — When God Creates What Religion Cannot

7 of 10 — The New Birth — Two Natures Fighting Under One Roof

8 of 10 — The New Birth — Born Into a Family Religion Cannot Join

9 of 10 — The New Birth — God's Birth Certificate for the Believer

10 of 10 — The New Birth — God's Children Cannot Be Unborn

Conclusion — Born of God: The Miracle Religion Cannot Produce or Reverse

Bible Study Chart — The New Birth: What It Means to Be Born Again

The New Birth — What It Means to Be Born Again

Key Passage: John 3:3–8

Introduction

“Born again” has been advertised, categorized, politicized, commercialized, sentimentalized, and repeated until much of modern Christianity uses the expression without knowing what Jesus Christ meant by it. Pollsters call millions of people born again because they selected the proper box on a survey. Politicians speak of the born-again vote as though regeneration were a precinct waiting to be counted. Churches print the words across banners while filling their pews with religious customers who have never been confronted with spiritual death. Celebrities announce that they are born again after surviving a scandal, abandoning a habit, changing careers, or discovering a new variety of spirituality. The phrase has been stretched until it describes nearly every personal transformation except the supernatural miracle found in the King James Bible. But the new birth is not a political identity, cultural label, denominational preference, emotional breakthrough, improved attitude, or fresh chapter in someone’s personal journey. Jesus Christ said, “Ye must be born again.” He was not offering Nicodemus a slogan. He was delivering heaven’s diagnosis and announcing the only remedy.

Nicodemus was not a drunken publican, a pagan philosopher, an ignorant farmer, or a notorious criminal. He was “a man of the Pharisees,” “a ruler of the Jews,” and “a master of Israel.” He possessed ancestry, education, authority, morality, religious discipline, scriptural knowledge, and public respectability. If any natural man could have entered the kingdom through pedigree and performance, Nicodemus had already reached the front of the line. Yet Jesus looked through the robe, title, synagogue, reputation, and Abrahamic blood and told him he required another birth. Christ did not suggest that Nicodemus add several Christian principles to his Judaism, improve his prayer life, become more sincere, or attend a religious seminar. The man did not need another credential hung upon the wall of his spiritual coffin. He needed life from God. Heaven selected one of Israel’s most decorated religious men to prove that religion can educate the corpse without raising it.

This series examines the new birth from the death inherited through Adam to the everlasting life possessed in Jesus Christ. It will distinguish natural birth from spiritual birth, flesh from Spirit, reformation from regeneration, church membership from sonship, water baptism from the Spirit’s operation, emotional experience from saving faith, the old man from the new man, standing from state, relationship from fellowship, and salvation from service and reward. It will show how the word of God functions as incorruptible seed, how the Holy Ghost quickens the believing sinner, how God creates a new creature in

Christ, how the believer enters God's family, how assurance rests upon God's written record, and why the consequences of being born of God are permanent. Religion has spent centuries polishing Adam; the Bible announces his death sentence. God does not improve the old creature until he deserves heaven. He creates life where death reigned and places the believing sinner into the risen Son of God.

1. Religion Emptied the Words While Keeping the Label

Modern Christianity retains biblical vocabulary while steadily draining the definitions. Sin becomes brokenness, repentance becomes personal growth, holiness becomes authenticity, preaching becomes conversation, worship becomes atmosphere, and the new birth becomes an emotional decision associated with church attendance. The words remain printed on the packaging, but the contents have been replaced. A pharmacist who removes the medicine and fills the bottle with colored water may preserve the label, dosage instructions, and professional smile, but the patient still dies. Religious language cannot save when biblical meaning has been discarded. "Born again" does not become true because a congregation repeats it loudly, prints it prominently, or attaches it to every hand raised during an invitation.

The new birth has also been confused with belonging to an evangelical subculture. A person adopts conservative moral positions, listens to Christian music, supports religious causes, learns several familiar phrases, and becomes socially recognizable as born again. But Christian culture can be learned by anyone with sufficient exposure. Judas learned apostolic vocabulary, walked with the disciples, preached, handled ministry funds, and remained "the son of perdition." Simon the sorcerer believed with the amazement of a man impressed by miracles, submitted to baptism, and continued with Philip, yet Peter told him, "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God." Outward identification can place a sinner beside living men without placing life inside him. A corpse carried into a family reunion has not become part of the conversation.

Religious marketing prefers a reduced new birth because the biblical doctrine offends human pride. A dead sinner cannot be congratulated for spiritual potential. He cannot be persuaded that Jesus merely improves an already valuable life. He cannot be invited to add Christ as a missing accessory to an otherwise successful existence. He must hear that his first birth placed him in Adam, that his nature is corrupt, that his righteousnesses are filthy rags, and that he possesses no life acceptable to God. That message will not fit neatly between a comedy routine and the announcement about the church coffee bar. It empties the sinner's pockets before grace fills his hand. Religion wants customers who feel improved; God begets children who know they were dead.

2. The First Birth Places Every Man in Adam

Natural birth produces natural life and nothing beyond it. Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). Flesh may become educated, cultured, disciplined, athletic, wealthy, artistic, patriotic, charitable, philosophical, or religious, but it remains flesh. Education can teach the flesh how to express itself intelligently. Law can restrain several of its actions. Civilization can make its wickedness socially respectable. Religion can give it hymns, ceremonies, titles, and moral routines. None of those changes its nature. A wolf trained to sit quietly during a church service has not become a lamb; it has merely become a well-behaved wolf with excellent Sunday attendance.

The first birth also places every man beneath Adam’s inheritance of sin and death. Romans 5:12 says, “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.” Adam opened the door, and death has walked through every generation since Eden. Hospitals fight it, medicine delays it, cosmetics disguise its approach, funeral homes soften its appearance, and philosophy invents names intended to make it sound less final. Death continues filling cemeteries without reading the latest human theories. Every grave is a monument to the serpent’s lie, “Ye shall not surely die.” Adam’s seed produces children already traveling toward dust because corruption cannot beget incorruption.

Physical death is the visible end of a deeper spiritual condition. Ephesians 2:1 describes the natural man as “dead in trespasses and sins,” while Ephesians 4:18 says he is “alienated from the life of God.” Spiritual death does not mean the sinner lacks intelligence, emotion, personality, conscience, or physical activity. It means he possesses no spiritual life from God. He may build cities, compose music, raise a family, earn degrees, give to charity, discuss theology, and occupy a pulpit while remaining dead Godward. First Timothy 5:6 describes one who “liveth in pleasure” as “dead while she liveth.” Biological activity does not overturn spiritual death. Maggots move inside a corpse, but nobody mistakes the motion for resurrection.

3. “Ye Must Be Born Again” Leaves No Alternative Entrance

Jesus told Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Except” excludes every substitute, “a man” includes every individual, “born again” identifies the necessity, and “cannot” announces human inability. Christ did not say the unregenerate man is unlikely to enter, will experience unusual difficulty, or should consider the new birth as one option among several. He “cannot.” Human religion has spent two thousand years looking for a crowbar large enough to pry open that word. It has brought sacraments, ceremonies, traditions, pilgrimages, moral accomplishments, charitable

works, priestly absolution, theological education, and denominational membership. “Cannot” remains locked.

Nicodemus immediately thought of natural birth: “can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” Jesus answered by distinguishing two births: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit,” followed by, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The water birth corresponds to the natural birth from the womb, and the Spirit birth comes from God. Christ did not install a baptistry in Nicodemus’s mother’s womb. He did not command a church ordinance, name an administrator, describe immersion, or declare that physical water regenerates. He contrasted flesh with Spirit. Nicodemus had already experienced the first birth; he needed the second.

The absolute necessity of the new birth destroys the claim that sincerity makes every religion acceptable. A sincere Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic, Mormon, Jehovah’s Witness, secular moralist, or churchgoing Protestant remains in Adam until he receives Jesus Christ. Sincerity can fasten a man more tightly to error. A pilot sincerely landing on the wrong runway does not avoid the mountain because his motives were kind. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” The new birth is exclusive because life is exclusive to the Son. A dead man does not need respect for every cemetery. He needs the One who walked out of the grave.

4. Religion Manufactures Counterfeit Birth Certificates

Water baptism is one of religion’s most common substitutes for regeneration. Water can touch the body, picture burial and resurrection, provide public identification, and answer a good conscience toward God. It cannot create spiritual life. Paul said, “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Corinthians 1:17). Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before water baptism, the thief reached paradise without it, and Simon the sorcerer entered the water while his heart remained wrong. If salvation depends upon sufficient water, an authorized administrator, a correct formula, and completed immersion, grace is no longer free. Religion has installed plumbing between the sinner and Calvary and appointed itself manager of the valve.

Moral reformation provides another counterfeit. A drunkard may leave the bottle, a thief may return property, an adulterer may become faithful, and a profane man may clean his speech. Those changes are good and may preserve families, health, freedom, and reputation. They are not regeneration. Lost men can reform through fear, discipline, social pressure, medical necessity, family love, or concern for consequences. Reformation changes conduct; regeneration imparts life. Jesus described a house that was “empty,

swept, and garnished,” yet because it remained empty, the unclean spirit returned with seven others more wicked than himself. A swept house without a new occupant is merely a cleaner address for returning devils.

Church membership and emotional decision-making complete the usual counterfeiting operation. A congregation may add a name to its roll, issue a certificate, and receive a profession without seeing the heart. An aisle may move a sinner from the back row to the front, but only the Holy Ghost can place him into Christ. Tears may accompany conviction, yet tears cannot wash away sin. Repeating a prayer may express faith, but the words themselves are not a saving formula. Religious emotion can produce trembling, relief, excitement, remorse, and temporary resolution. Felix trembled and postponed; Agrippa was almost persuaded; Judas confessed guilt and died lost. The new birth is not measured by the amount of noise made around the delivery room. Life is present because God begat it, not because the nervous system put on a show.

5. God Quickens Through the Word and the Holy Ghost

The sinner is born again by incorruptible seed. First Peter 1:23 says, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” James 1:18 adds, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.” God has joined regeneration to His living word. The Bible is not inspirational packaging surrounding a mystical encounter. It is the seed through which the Holy Ghost reveals Christ and produces faith. Romans 10:17 says, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” A preacher may plant, a teacher may water, and a parent may repeat the gospel faithfully, but “God gave the increase.”

The saving message is the gospel of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. The sinner is not saved by admiring Christ’s teaching, copying His example, joining an organization using His name, or promising to imitate His character. He is saved by trusting the crucified and risen Son of God who paid for sin. Ephesians 1:13 gives the Church Age order: the sinner hears “the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,” believes in Christ, and is sealed with the Holy Ghost. Men construct mazes; God made the entrance plain.

Titus 3:5 calls this work “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Regeneration is not renovation. The Holy Ghost does not patch Adam’s foundation, repaint the walls, and call the structure new. He quickens the dead spirit, creates a new man, places the believer into Christ’s body, indwells him, and seals him unto the day of redemption. Salvation is God’s operation. The sinner contributes guilt, death, and need;

Christ supplies blood, righteousness, resurrection, and life. Faith is the empty hand receiving the gift. Nobody congratulates an empty hand for manufacturing what was placed inside it.

6. The New Birth Creates Life Without Eradicating the Flesh

Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” The believer does not become a new creature by attaching Christian habits to the old nature. He becomes new because the Holy Ghost places him “in Christ.” In Adam he possessed condemnation and death; in Christ he possesses righteousness and life. God performs a creative act in the inward man. Ephesians 4:24 says the new man “after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Religion changes the costume; God creates the man. Salvation is not Adam wearing Christ’s necktie.

The new creature does not mean the flesh becomes sinless. Paul said, “in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). Galatians 5:17 says, “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” The believer carries two contrary natures: the old nature inherited through Adam and the new man created by God. The old nature does not become housebroken, trustworthy, or spiritually improved. It must be reckoned dead, denied, and refused control. The new man delights in God’s law, agrees with Scripture, and desires righteousness. Before salvation the flesh ruled without a spiritual rival; after salvation it discovers another occupant under the roof.

This distinction explains both Christian failure and Christian warfare. A believer may stumble seriously without proving God’s new creation disappeared. He may grieve the Spirit, lose fellowship, damage testimony, invite chastening, and lose reward. Yet the conflict itself exists because life entered. Dead men do not fight over holiness. The answer is neither sinless-perfection pride nor salvation-doubting despair. The Christian must walk in the Spirit, feed the inward man through Scripture, confess sin, yield his members to God, and refuse provision for the flesh. Victory concerns daily state; sonship concerns eternal standing. Confusing the two turns discipleship into salvation and every stumble into another funeral.

7. The New Birth Establishes Sonship, Assurance, and Permanence

John 1:12–13 says those who receive Christ and believe on His name are given “power to become the sons of God,” being born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” God has no grandchildren. Christian parents can teach the gospel but cannot transmit regeneration through blood. A priest cannot beget a child through ceremony, a denomination cannot vote one into heaven, and an infant cannot borrow saving faith from godparents. Sonship comes through receiving Christ. All men are God’s

creatures; only those born of God are His children. Universal fatherhood is sentimental theology trying to enter the family without the Son.

God does not leave His children without assurance. First John 5:11 says, “this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” Romans 8:16 says, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Assurance rests upon Christ’s finished work, God’s written promises, present possession of eternal life, and the Spirit’s witness and seal. It does not rest upon remembering the exact date, reconstructing an emotional experience, producing a flawless record, or examining faith until faith becomes its own object. Feelings are weather; Scripture is the deed.

The consequences of the new birth are permanent because the seed is incorruptible, the life is everlasting, the relationship is sonship, the position is in Christ, and the believer is sealed “unto the day of redemption.” A child may disobey, disgrace the family, and suffer severe correction without becoming unborn. Hebrews 12 says chastening proves sonship. First Corinthians 3 says a believer’s works may burn while “he himself shall be saved.” Salvation differs from service, relationship from fellowship, standing from state, and eternal life from reward. Religion turns everlasting life into temporary probation because it cannot tolerate a salvation completed by Another. God gives His sheep eternal life and says, “they shall never perish.” Heaven does not use “never” as promotional language.

Conclusion

This ten-part series follows the new birth from Adam’s spiritual graveyard to the believer’s permanent life in Jesus Christ. It begins with the birth flesh cannot provide, examines the dead condition of natural man, reveals God’s quickening power, identifies the incorruptible seed, defines regeneration, explains the new creature, distinguishes the two natures, establishes entrance into God’s family, grounds assurance in God’s record, and finishes with the permanence of being born of God. Each doctrine strengthens the others. Remove spiritual death, and regeneration becomes unnecessary. Remove the word, and experience replaces truth. Remove the new man, and Christianity becomes moral imitation. Remove eternal security, and everlasting life becomes a religious rental agreement.

The new birth leaves human pride with nothing to contribute. Adam cannot educate himself into life, baptize himself into life, reform himself into life, join himself into life, feel himself into life, or promise enough future obedience to deserve life. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. The sinner hears that gospel, believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, and God quickens him, regenerates him, places him into Christ, gives him eternal life, makes him a son, indwells him, and seals him. Salvation is not God applauding Adam’s

successful climb. It is God coming down into the cemetery and commanding the dead to live.

The words remain as absolute as when Jesus spoke them to Nicodemus beneath the darkness of Jerusalem: “Ye must be born again.” Not cleaned up, inspired, religiously affiliated, emotionally awakened, sacramentally processed, politically classified, or culturally evangelical. Born again. The first birth gave you Adam’s life and Adam’s destination. Only the second birth gives you Christ’s life and Christ’s destination. Your mother could bring you into the kingdom of men, but only God can bring you into the kingdom of God.

1 of 10 — The New Birth — The Birth Your Mother Could Never Give You

Key Passage: John 3:1–8

Introduction

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night carrying enough religion to sink a fishing boat. He was “a man of the Pharisees,” “a ruler of the Jews,” and a recognized “master of Israel.” He possessed education, authority, ancestry, reputation, biblical information, and the kind of religious credentials that would have earned him a reserved parking place at nearly any modern church conference. He knew the law, wore the garments, observed the ceremonies, quoted the rabbis, defended the traditions, and occupied a seat among the religious authorities of his nation. Yet when he stood before Jesus Christ, every ribbon on his religious uniform became worthless. The Lord did not congratulate him for being sincere, thank him for his respectful approach, or suggest that he add a few Christian principles to his already impressive spiritual résumé. Christ reached beneath the robe, the title, the ancestry, and the admiration of men and put His finger upon the one deficiency religion could never repair: Nicodemus had been born once, but he had never been born again. He had life from his mother, standing among his people, and instruction from his teachers, but he did not possess life from God. He was not an immoral pagan staggering out of a tavern; he was a moral theologian walking out of a synagogue. That is precisely why the account is so devastating. God selected one of the best natural men available to demonstrate that the best natural man is still natural. Religion may decorate Adam’s fallen offspring, but decoration is not regeneration. A corpse in priestly garments is still a corpse, and heaven is not fooled by the wardrobe.

“Born again” has become one of the most overused and underexamined expressions in the religious world. Politicians use it to describe a voting constituency, pollsters use it to label a demographic, churches use it as advertising language, and emotional religion uses it for any experience that produces wet eyes and raised hands. A man survives an accident and calls himself born again. A celebrity abandons one destructive habit and announces that he has been born again. A church member feels unusually warm during the final stanza of an invitation hymn and assumes that the sensation must have been regeneration. The words of Jesus Christ have been stretched until they cover nearly every religious experience except the miracle He was describing. But the new birth is not a change of mood, an improvement of manners, an alteration of political preference, or a promise to behave better. It is not Adam enrolling in a self-improvement program conducted in a fellowship hall. It is an act of God by which spiritual life is imparted to a sinner who was dead in trespasses and sins. Fallen man does not need his spiritual batteries charged; he needs life where no life exists. He does not need a heavenly life coach standing beside his coffin and shouting encouragement through the lid. He needs the voice of God to do for him what Christ did for Lazarus: call life into the place where death has established its headquarters. When Jesus said, “Ye must be born again,” He was not offering one religious option among several. The word “must” closed every side door, boarded every religious window, and left one entrance into the kingdom of God.

The entire conversation in John 3 turns upon the distinction between two births. One birth is natural; the other is spiritual. One comes through human parents; the other comes from God. One places a man in Adam’s fallen family; the other makes him a son of God. One produces flesh because “that which is born of the flesh is flesh”; the other produces spiritual life because “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The first birth can provide a body, a name, a nationality, an inheritance, a social position, and a place in human society, but it cannot provide eternal life. A mother can give her child everything present in her natural life, but she cannot pass along a spiritual life she does not possess by nature. Flesh reproduces after its kind, and Adam’s fallen race has never produced a naturally sinless child. The nursery may contain beautiful babies, loving parents, and hopeful dreams, but every cradle rocks another descendant of a fallen man toward a grave. That is not cruelty; it is the biblical diagnosis. “In Adam all die” (1 Corinthians 15:22), and no amount of religious perfume can remove the smell of death from Adam’s house. The new birth is therefore not optional theological furniture for advanced Christians. It is the absolute necessity standing between every natural man and the kingdom of God. Your mother could give you your first breath, but she could not give you the breath of heaven. She could bring you into this world, but only God can fit you for the world to come.

1. The Night Religion Met the Light

Nicodemus began respectfully: “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God.” That sounded complimentary, but it fell short of the truth by an eternity. Jesus Christ was not merely “a teacher come from God”; He was God manifest in the flesh. Nicodemus had examined the miracles and reached a reasonable religious conclusion, but reasonable conclusions do not regenerate sinners. He knew that “no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him,” yet recognizing divine activity is not the same as receiving divine life. Pharaoh’s magicians eventually admitted, “This is the finger of God,” but that confession did not make them saints. Devils recognized Jesus as “the Holy One of God,” but correct identification did not turn devils into sons. A man can acknowledge that Christ was a great teacher, admit that His miracles were genuine, admire His moral instruction, respect His influence upon history, and remain as spiritually dead as the stones beneath a cathedral floor. Modern religion is packed with people who compliment Jesus while refusing His verdict. They call Him a teacher because “teacher” leaves the student in charge of deciding which lessons to accept. They call Him an example because an example can be admired from a safe distance. They call Him a reformer because a reformer may improve society without demanding that the individual confess himself dead and condemned. But Jesus did not arrive to polish the philosophy of Nicodemus. He arrived to tell Nicodemus that all his religion had not given him life.

Christ’s answer appears abrupt because He ignored the compliment and addressed the condition: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The Lord did not allow Nicodemus to guide the conversation toward miracles, rabbinical debate, national restoration, or theological shop talk. Christ knew what was in man, and He went directly to the graveyard. “Except” eliminates every substitute; “a man” includes every individual; “born again” identifies the necessity; and “cannot” announces human inability. The verse does not say that an unregenerate man is unlikely to see the kingdom or that he will find entrance unusually difficult. It says he “cannot.” That one word smashes the religious ladder while the climber is still bragging about the height of his ascent. Nicodemus could not see the kingdom by keeping ceremonies, tracing his lineage to Abraham, occupying a religious office, studying Hebrew, giving alms, fasting twice in the week, or maintaining a spotless public reputation. The obstacle was not insufficient effort; it was the wrong birth. A cat may strain, study, practice, and attend flying lessons taught by the finest birds in the forest, but it will never become an eagle because effort cannot alter nature. In the same manner, a child of Adam cannot discipline himself into a child of God. Heaven cannot be reached by improving the quality of the flesh because flesh is the very thing that disqualifies him.

The Lord’s treatment of Nicodemus also exposes the modern superstition that religious knowledge equals spiritual life. Nicodemus knew the Scriptures well enough to teach

Israel, yet Christ asked him, “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” Knowledge is valuable, but knowledge without regeneration merely gives the corpse a larger vocabulary. A man may memorize entire chapters, explain Greek verb tenses, compare manuscript families, diagram covenants, and possess a library large enough to require reinforced flooring, yet remain outside the family of God. The Pharisees searched the Scriptures because they thought that the possession of biblical information guaranteed life, but Christ said, “And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40). The Book they studied testified of the Person they rejected. That is the tragedy of religion without regeneration: it can spend a lifetime examining the road signs while refusing to travel to the destination. Seminary training cannot cause the new birth. Ordination cannot cause it. A clerical collar cannot cause it. Standing behind a pulpit cannot cause it. Teaching Sunday school cannot cause it. Judas preached, performed signs, walked with the apostles, handled the money, and kissed the right Person, but he still went “to his own place.” Heaven does not ask how close a man stood to Christian things; heaven asks whether life from God ever entered him. Nicodemus came with knowledge in his head and darkness in his soul, and the Light of the world refused to mistake the one for the other.

2. Born of Water Is Not Born in a Baptistry

Nicodemus responded according to the only birth he knew: “How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” The question may sound foolish after two thousand years of Christian preaching, but it reveals the immediate context with remarkable clarity. Nicodemus understood Christ to be speaking about birth, so his mind returned to the womb. Jesus answered, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” and then immediately explained the two births: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The water birth corresponds to the birth of flesh; the Spirit birth corresponds to the birth of spirit. The passage supplies its own dictionary before the theologians arrive with buckets, fonts, robes, and denominational plumbing. A child develops in water within the womb, comes through a natural birth, and enters the world as flesh. That birth fulfills the first part of Christ’s contrast, but it cannot fulfill the second. Nicodemus had already been born of water; otherwise he would not have been standing there asking questions. His problem was not that he needed to repeat his natural birth or add a ceremony to it. His problem was that he had never been born of the Spirit. Christ was not instructing a grown ruler to return to infancy; He was showing him that the life produced in his mother’s womb could never give him entrance into God’s kingdom.

The baptismal-regeneration crowd reads John 3 with the same enthusiasm a hardware salesman brings to a leaky pipe: every mention of water becomes an opportunity to sell the

customer a religious faucet. Yet there is no baptizer in the passage, no command to be baptized, no mode of baptism described, no formula pronounced, no church ordinance administered, and no statement that water removes sin. The subject is birth, the setting is a conversation with a man thinking about his mother's womb, and the Lord's explanation contrasts flesh with Spirit. The Christian ordinance picturing the believer's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection had not yet been revealed in its Church Age significance, because Christ had not yet died, been buried, or risen again. To drag that ordinance backward into John 3:5 and make water the instrument of regeneration is to install a baptistry in Nicodemus's mother's womb and then congratulate oneself for taking the Bible literally. Literal interpretation does not mean grabbing the nearest physical object and ignoring the context. It means believing the words where God placed them, in the order He gave them, with the explanation that follows them. Verse 6 is not a decorative afterthought. It is Christ's interpretation of verse 5. Flesh comes from flesh; spirit comes from the Spirit. Rome may bring a font, Campbellism may bring a tank, and sacramental religion may bring enough water to float Noah's ark, but none of them can drown the old nature into becoming a son of God.

The rest of the New Testament confirms that water baptism and the new birth are not the same operation. Paul declared, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 1:17). If baptism were the act that caused regeneration, that statement would make Paul's commission sound like a physician saying he was sent to diagnose disease but not administer the cure. Paul thanked God that he had baptized very few Corinthians, although he had begotten them "through the gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15). Cornelius and his household received the Holy Ghost before they entered the water in Acts 10, proving that God had already accepted them before Peter asked for a baptismal pool. The Ethiopian eunuch believed before he was baptized, and Philip required faith before water: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The thief on the cross reached paradise without touching one drop of baptismal water, while Simon the sorcerer went down into the water and came up "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Water can wet the flesh, picture a burial, identify a believer publicly, and answer a good conscience toward God, but it cannot create spiritual life. A sinner may go into the baptistry dry and come out wet, but if he entered without Christ, he leaves with nothing more eternal than damp clothing.

3. Flesh Never Graduates Into Spirit

Christ's words are exact: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." He did not say that flesh is spirit in an undeveloped stage, that flesh contains a divine spark waiting to be discovered, or that flesh can evolve into spirit through education and discipline. Flesh is

flesh. It begins that way, continues that way, and finishes that way. The first birth places every man under Adam's headship, for "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men" (Romans 5:12). Adam did not merely commit an isolated personal mistake that affected his private record. He opened the door through which sin and death entered the entire human family. Every natural descendant arrives with Adam's fallen nature and eventually demonstrates that nature by personal transgression. No parent must teach a child to lie, covet, disobey, or seize another child's toy. The lessons come already written into the flesh. Parents must labor to teach truth, restraint, obedience, and generosity because the current of fallen nature runs in the opposite direction. David said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). He was not accusing his mother of immorality; he was confessing the condition into which Adam's descendants are conceived. The first cry from the cradle is not a request to serve others. Flesh arrives announcing its needs and spends the rest of its life trying to make the universe answer them.

Civilization can restrain the flesh, culture can polish it, and education can teach it to sin with better grammar, but none of those things changes its nature. An ignorant thief may steal a wallet; an educated thief may steal a corporation. A barbarian may kill with a club; a civilized government may kill with stamped documents, legal terminology, and a committee vote. Education multiplies the tools available to the nature being educated. If the nature remains corrupt, greater intelligence merely equips corruption with sharper instruments. The twentieth century was not drenched in blood because men lacked universities, philosophy, science, or culture. Some of history's most efficient murderers were surrounded by professors, musicians, engineers, and physicians. Fallen flesh can play Bach in the evening and build a gas chamber in the morning. That is why the gospel is not an educational campaign intended to awaken the goodness buried inside humanity. Scripture says, "There is none righteous, no, not one," and, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Romans 3:10, 12). The issue is not that every man behaves as wickedly as possible; the issue is that no man possesses a nature capable of meeting God's righteousness. You can teach a wolf table manners, but when the lamb enters the room, his diploma will not change his appetite.

Religious training fares no better because religious flesh is still flesh. Saul of Tarsus possessed circumcision, tribal identity, Hebrew ancestry, Pharisaic discipline, zeal, and a record that appeared blameless under the law. If religious pedigree could regenerate a man, Saul would have entered heaven at the head of the class. Yet after meeting Jesus Christ, he gathered those achievements into one pile and called them "dung" (Philippians 3:8). That is not polite religious language, but the Holy Ghost was not trying to impress the alumni association. Paul discovered that his best natural righteousness could not survive

one glance at the righteousness of God. Isaiah had already declared, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Notice that the verse does not merely condemn man’s wickedness; it condemns the righteousnesses he offers as payment. The drunkard’s bottle cannot save him, but neither can the Pharisee’s prayer shawl. The harlot’s immorality cannot save her, but neither can the nun’s vow. Sinful flesh and religious flesh may occupy opposite ends of society’s pew, but both belong to Adam and both end at the same grave. Hell will contain respectable men who never tasted liquor, never robbed a bank, never missed a church service, and never understood that clean flesh is not a new creature. God does not save the wicked by teaching them to imitate the respectable. He tells both groups, “Ye must be born again.”

4. The Spirit Produces What Flesh Cannot Manufacture

“That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The second birth originates with the Holy Ghost, not with human willpower, religious machinery, or ceremonial cooperation. John 1:13 says that the sons of God “were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” “Not of blood” eliminates ancestry. “Nor of the will of the flesh” eliminates natural effort. “Nor of the will of man” eliminates human authority and religious administration. “But of God” identifies the only Source capable of producing spiritual life. A priest cannot generate it with a sacrament, a preacher cannot manufacture it with an invitation, and a parent cannot transfer it through family devotion. Men can present the gospel, plead with the sinner, pray for his salvation, and point him toward Jesus Christ, but the life itself must come from God. Titus 3:5 calls it “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Regeneration is not the Holy Ghost helping the old nature achieve its potential; it is the Holy Ghost imparting life that the old nature never possessed. God does not place Adam in a heavenly repair shop, replace a few worn parts, buff the exterior, and return him with a religious warranty. The workmanship is creative, not cosmetic. Salvation is not the rehabilitation of the first birth. It is the miracle of the second.

Jesus compared the Spirit’s operation to the wind: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” A man cannot see the wind itself, but he can see the trees bend, hear the leaves move, and feel the force upon his face. Likewise, the spiritual operation of regeneration is invisible to human eyes, but its reality is not imaginary. No camera photographs the Holy Ghost quickening the dead spirit, no physician records the new birth on a medical chart, and no laboratory can weigh eternal life. Yet the inability of fleshly instruments to measure a spiritual operation does not make that operation less real. A natural man rejects such truth because “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:14). He wants God reduced to something his

microscope can inspect and his committee can approve. But the microscope was designed to examine matter, not its Maker. The Holy Ghost works in a realm beyond the reach of flesh while producing effects that become evident in the believer's understanding, desires, convictions, and relationship with God. Fruit does not cause the birth, but birth makes fruit possible. The wind does not need permission from the weather vane before it blows, and the Holy Ghost does not require a theologian's ability to diagram regeneration before He performs it.

The Spirit accomplishes this work through the word of God received by faith. First Peter 1:23 says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." James 1:18 adds, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." The gospel is preached, the sinner hears how Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again, and faith receives God's testimony. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). The sinner does not earn regeneration by believing; faith is the empty hand receiving what Christ purchased. The hand contributes nothing to the gift except its need. No one praises a beggar's palm for manufacturing the coin placed within it. The power resides in the gospel, the merit resides in Christ, the life comes from the Spirit, and the glory belongs to God. Yet the sinner must not use divine sovereignty as an excuse for unbelief. The same Bible that says the birth is "of God" commands, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). God has not asked the sinner to understand every hidden operation of the Spirit. He has commanded him to believe the record He gave of His Son. A drowning man does not need a lecture on the molecular structure of the lifeboat; he needs to get into it.

5. A New Creature, Not a Religious Costume

Second Corinthians 5:17 declares, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The verse does not say that he is an improved creature, a recommitted creature, a more positive creature, or a creature with a church sticker attached to his bumper. He is "a new creature." That language reaches back to the creative power of God. The same Lord who spoke light into existence performs an inward creative act when He saves a sinner. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 4:6). Salvation is not produced by finding a spark of light hidden in man; God commands light to shine where darkness ruled. The believer is placed "in Christ," and that position supplies what Adam could never give him. In Adam he inherited sin, condemnation, and death; in Christ he receives righteousness, justification, and life. The first birth identified him with a fallen head; the second birth joins him to the risen Head. This is not poetic symbolism floating above practical reality. It is the believer's standing before God. Heaven no longer sees him merely as a condemned son of Adam attempting to

improve his record. He stands accepted in the beloved, complete in Christ, and made the righteousness of God in Him. Religion changes uniforms; regeneration changes kingdoms.

The new creature must be distinguished from the flesh the believer continues to carry. The new birth does not make the natural body sinless, eradicate the old nature, or transform every thought and habit into perfection overnight. Paul wrote as a saved apostle, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). He did not say that Christ dwelled nowhere in him; he carefully identified the location of the problem: “in my flesh.” The believer possesses a new man “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24), while the old man remains corrupt “according to the deceitful lusts.” That explains the warfare described in Galatians 5:17: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” Before salvation, the flesh occupied the throne without a rival. After the new birth, the flesh discovers an enemy within the gates. The battle does not prove the absence of life; it proves that another nature is present to oppose the old one. Dead men do not fight over holiness. The believer may become alarmed by the conflict, but he should be far more alarmed if sin produces no conflict at all. A battlefield is unpleasant, but it is evidence that the territory is contested.

This distinction also protects the doctrine of the new birth from two opposite errors: sinless perfection and careless living. The perfectionist claims that regeneration eradicates the old nature, but his temper, pride, dishonesty, and secret thoughts usually bring the doctrine crashing down before lunch. He then either redefines sin until nothing counts or pretends that his flesh has become spiritual because it learned to speak softly. On the other side, the careless professor claims that eternal security gives him permission to serve the flesh without consequence. Scripture answers both errors. The flesh is not regenerated, so the believer must “reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin” and refuse to let sin reign in his mortal body. Yet the new man is God’s creation, so failure in the flesh does not undo the birth. Sin can break fellowship, bring chastening, destroy testimony, ruin usefulness, and burn rewards at the judgment seat of Christ, but it cannot turn the new creature back into an unregenerate son of Adam. God does not excuse the believer’s sin, and He does not deny His own workmanship. The Christian life is not pretending the old man has disappeared; it is refusing to hand him the keys merely because he still lives in the building.

6. Counterfeit Birth Certificates Issued by Religion

Church membership is one of religion’s favorite substitutes for regeneration. A sinner fills out a card, answers several questions, shakes the preacher’s hand, receives the right hand of fellowship, and assumes that heaven copied the transaction into the Lamb’s book of life.

But joining a church no more makes a man a Christian than walking into a garage makes him an automobile. The local church is a congregation of professing believers, not a factory that manufactures sons of God through committee approval. The church can receive a false professor because its leaders cannot see the heart. It can also remove a genuine believer from membership because of sin or discipline without removing him from the body of Christ. Human rolls and heavenly life are not identical. Judas belonged to the apostolic company and went to perdition; the dying thief belonged to no local congregation and went to paradise. This does not make church membership unimportant. A saved man ought to identify with a sound local church, submit to biblical teaching, fellowship with believers, serve, give, pray, and participate faithfully. But those are privileges and responsibilities following salvation, not instruments producing it. The church is a home for the living, not a maternity ward capable of giving birth to the dead. When a congregation mistakes membership for regeneration, the pews fill with well-dressed corpses who eventually vote to replace the Bible because dead men have no appetite for living bread.

Moral reformation is another counterfeit. A man stops drinking, abandons gambling, becomes faithful to his wife, pays his debts, cleans up his language, and begins attending church. Every one of those changes is good, but the combined weight of them cannot produce the new birth. Cornelius was devout, feared God, gave alms, prayed always, and possessed a good report among the Jews, yet an angel directed him to Peter, “who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:14). His morality did not eliminate his need for the gospel. Reformation rearranges behavior; regeneration imparts life. A man can remove rotten fruit from a dead tree, tie wax apples to its branches, and fool a passerby at fifty yards, but the roots remain dead. Eventually the weather exposes the imitation. The same thing happens when sinners attempt to live like Christians without becoming Christians. They adopt standards without receiving the Saviour, imitate fruit without possessing the Root, and eventually discover that religious effort is exhausting when no spiritual life supplies it. The gospel does not oppose good behavior; it opposes trusting good behavior as a substitute for Christ. The clean-living Pharisee and the filthy publican both need mercy. One carries his sins openly, while the other hides his beneath a moral overcoat, but God sees through both garments.

Emotional decision-making may be the most deceptive counterfeit because genuine conversion can involve deep emotion. A sinner may weep under conviction, rejoice upon believing, tremble when confronted with judgment, or feel an enormous burden lift when he understands forgiveness. There is nothing wrong with emotion in its proper place. The problem begins when the emotion becomes the evidence, the cause, or the object of faith. Tears cannot wash away sin; the blood of Christ does that. Goose bumps cannot seal the soul; the Holy Ghost does that. Walking an aisle cannot place a sinner into Christ; believing

the gospel does that. Repeating a prayer is not a magic formula that forces God to regenerate an unbelieving heart. A man can say every correct word while trusting the words he said instead of the Saviour who died. Conversely, another sinner may believe quietly, without falling, shouting, trembling, or producing enough drama for a religious television program. Salvation does not depend upon whether the nervous system puts on a show. The question is not, "Did you feel something impressive?" The question is, "What did you do with Jesus Christ?" Feelings make excellent passengers but miserable drivers. Put them behind the wheel of assurance, and they will steer the soul into a ditch every time the weather changes.

7. Born Once and Die Twice, or Born Twice and Die Once

The first birth ends in physical death because it comes through Adam. Hebrews 9:27 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." The grave is not the end of the natural man's problem; it is the doorway into judgment. Revelation 20 describes the unsaved dead standing before the great white throne, being judged according to their works, and cast into the lake of fire. Scripture calls that final judgment "the second death." The man who possesses only one birth faces two deaths: the separation of soul from body and the final consignment of the condemned into the lake of fire. Human philosophy may rename death, soften judgment, spiritualize hell, and hire scholars to sand the edges off Revelation, but the fire does not cool because a professor changed the label on the furnace. Jesus warned about hell more plainly than the men who claim to admire His ethical teaching. The same Christ who said, "God so loved the world," said that the unbeliever "is condemned already" and that "the wrath of God abideth on him." Love does not require God to lie about judgment. Love provided an escape at infinite cost. The cross proves both the greatness of God's love and the horror of the condemnation from which that love saves. Calvary was not divine overreaction to a minor human flaw. The Son of God did not bleed because mankind needed a confidence boost.

The second birth gives eternal life as a present possession. Jesus said, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). "Hath" does not mean might receive it after a lifetime of successful probation. It means possesses it now. John 5:24 says that the believer "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." The believer is not crawling from death toward life and hoping to complete the journey before he commits another sin. God says he "is passed." First John 5:12 states, "He that hath the Son hath life," and verse 13 explains that these things were written "that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Eternal life cannot be temporary without language becoming meaningless. If a man possesses life that ends, he never possessed eternal life; he possessed extended life. God did not hand the believer a renewable religious lease

subject to monthly inspection. The life is in His Son, and the believer has the Son. Christ said, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). To destroy the believer's life, the devil would need to climb into heaven, overthrow the throne, kill the risen Christ, corrupt the incorruptible seed, break the Spirit's seal, and reverse the word of the God who cannot lie. That is a rather crowded assignment for a defeated cherub awaiting the lake of fire.

The man born twice may experience physical death if the Rapture does not occur first, but the second death has no claim upon him. Revelation 20:6 says, "on such the second death hath no power." His body may return temporarily to the dust, but his life is hid with Christ in God, and his body will be raised or changed when Christ comes for His Church. The first birth gave him a dying body; the second birth secured an eternal future. That is why eternal security is not a denominational luxury attached to regeneration. It is one of the necessary consequences of the birth itself. First Peter 1:23 says the believer is born of "incorruptible" seed that "liveth and abideth for ever." The Holy Ghost seals him "unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). Christ gives His sheep eternal life and declares, "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). A disobedient child may require severe chastening, and a carnal believer may lose fellowship, joy, testimony, usefulness, health, and reward. But chastening proves that God deals with him "as with sons" (Hebrews 12:7); it does not transform a son back into a stranger. A birth establishes a relationship. Failure may disgrace that relationship, but it cannot travel backward through history and prevent the birth from having occurred.

Conclusion

Nicodemus entered the conversation as a ruler, a Pharisee, and a master of Israel, but none of those titles could answer the words, "Ye must be born again." He stood before Christ as every natural man stands before Him: born of the flesh, connected to Adam, unable to produce spiritual life, and barred from the kingdom by the nature received at his first birth. His ancestry could not save him because God has no saving arrangement with human bloodlines. His education could not save him because information cannot raise the dead. His morality could not save him because human righteousness cannot equal God's righteousness. His religion could not save him because ceremonies operate upon the outside while the problem lies within. He needed the birth his mother could never give him. So does every man. The issue is not whether your parents were Christians, whether you were dedicated as an infant, whether you were baptized, whether your name appears on a church roll, whether you believe in God, or whether you have accumulated enough respectable conduct to impress the neighbors. Cain believed in God, Balaam spoke with God, Judas followed Christ, and the Pharisees crossed land and sea to make converts.

Religious activity can surround a dead soul like flowers surrounding a casket. The arrangement may look beautiful, but nobody mistakes the flowers for a resurrection.

The new birth comes when a sinner receives God's testimony concerning His Son and believes the gospel of the grace of God. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. His blood satisfied the judgment sin demanded, His resurrection conquered death, and His righteousness is received by faith rather than earned by works. The Holy Ghost takes the living, incorruptible word and quickens the believing sinner. God places him in Christ, makes him a new creature, seals him unto the day of redemption, and gives him eternal life. That is not joining religion; it is passing from death unto life. It is not cleaning the old man; it is receiving a new man. It is not promising God that the flesh will behave well enough to deserve heaven; it is admitting that the flesh has nothing God will accept and resting entirely upon Jesus Christ. Salvation does not begin when a sinner offers God an improved version of himself. It begins when he stops presenting Adam's bankrupt account and receives the riches of Christ freely. Grace does not help good men finish climbing to heaven. Grace comes down to dead men, pays their debt, gives them life, and seats them in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The command still stands with all the force it carried on that dark Jerusalem night: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Do not marvel at it, redefine it, ritualize it, sentimentalize it, or hide behind a religious résumé. Believe it. The first birth has already done everything it can do for you. It gave you natural life, placed you in Adam's family, and started a journey that ends at a grave. It cannot forgive one sin, impart one grain of righteousness, or provide one second of eternal life. You need another birth from another Source. You need the Spirit of God to do what your mother, minister, church, baptism, morality, and determination can never do. You need life from above. The sinner born only once remains under the sentence of two deaths, but the sinner who receives Jesus Christ is born into a life the second death cannot touch. Your mother carried you into the kingdom of men; only God can bring you into the kingdom of God. The first birth put your name on a birth certificate destined for the county archives. The second birth puts your name in heaven—and hell owns no eraser.

2 of 10 — The New Birth — A Spiritual Corpse in a Sunday Suit

Key Passage: Ephesians 2:1–10

Introduction

God's description of the natural man is not flattering enough for a psychology textbook, gentle enough for a church-growth seminar, or optimistic enough for a motivational preacher. Ephesians 2:1 says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." God does not say that the sinner is spiritually bruised, morally underdeveloped, socially disadvantaged, religiously uninformed, or temporarily separated from his better self. He says the man is dead. That is the diagnosis from the Physician who cannot misread the chart. Modern religion dislikes the word because dead men cannot be coached, rehabilitated, reasoned into life, or persuaded to discover the divine potential supposedly sleeping inside them. Death leaves no room for boasting. A sick man may assist the physician, follow instructions, change his diet, and boast that his determination contributed to his recovery. A dead man contributes nothing to his resurrection. He cannot raise one finger, draw one breath, or take one step toward the life he lacks. That is precisely the condition of fallen man toward God. His body may move, his mind may calculate, his emotions may respond, and his mouth may speak religious words, but his spiritual condition remains death. He may own a Bible, occupy a pew, sing every stanza, bow at the correct moment, and shake hands with the preacher at the door, but heaven does not alter the death certificate because the corpse put on a Sunday suit.

The natural man's spiritual death explains why human beings can display intelligence, affection, creativity, courage, and even a measure of outward morality while remaining alienated from God. Spiritual death does not mean that the sinner has ceased to exist, lost every human capacity, or become incapable of performing acts that benefit his family and neighbors. It means that he possesses no spiritual life from God and no natural ability to produce it. Ephesians 4:18 describes fallen men as "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." The problem is not merely that man has made several poor decisions and needs improved information. He is alienated from the life of God. His intelligence can study creation while refusing the Creator. His conscience can accuse him while failing to cure him. His emotions can be stirred by a hymn while his spirit remains dead. His religion can teach him to imitate the vocabulary of living men without giving him their life. A parrot may repeat "Praise the Lord," but no one invites it to preach Romans. Sounding alive is not being alive. Religion has built an enormous industry around teaching dead men how to imitate the movements of the living, but God has never confused religious motion with spiritual life.

The gospel begins by agreeing with God's diagnosis. It does not flatter Adam's race with talk about untapped goodness, wounded innocence, or spiritual potential waiting for the correct atmosphere. It announces that sin has brought death, that death has passed upon all men, and that life exists only in Jesus Christ. The structure of Ephesians 2 is as plain as a tombstone: "dead in trespasses and sins," then "But God," and finally "hath quickened us

together with Christ.” Man supplies the death; God supplies the life. Sin digs the grave; mercy opens it. Adam passes condemnation to his natural offspring; Christ gives eternal life to those who believe. Nothing in the passage resembles self-improvement. God does not enter the cemetery carrying a makeup case and a clean necktie. He enters with resurrection power. Until a sinner understands that he is dead, he will continue shopping for religious vitamins, moral cosmetics, intellectual crutches, and sacramental life-support machines. But a corpse does not need vitamins. It needs life. The gospel is not God’s plan for helping bad men become nicer dead men. It is the proclamation that the risen Christ can quicken those who possess no life in themselves.

1. Death Entered Before Adam Reached a Grave

God warned Adam in Genesis 2:17, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” The serpent contradicted God with four words: “Ye shall not surely die.” Adam ate, yet his body continued breathing for centuries. The Bible critic then imagines he has caught God in a contradiction, which is rather like an ant accusing an engineer of misunderstanding a bridge. God said Adam would die “in the day” he ate, and Adam did die that day spiritually. His body began its march toward physical death, but his fellowship with God collapsed immediately. Before sin, Adam and Eve stood naked and unashamed in the presence of their Creator. After sin, they hid among the trees, covered themselves with fig leaves, blamed one another, and fled from the voice that had once meant fellowship. Something died before Adam’s heart stopped beating. The first evidence of death was not a funeral; it was separation from God. Sin did not merely stain Adam’s record. It severed the life-giving fellowship for which he had been created. The man who had received breath directly from God now crouched behind leaves, trying to hide from omniscience with gardening supplies.

The effects of Adam’s fall did not remain inside Eden. Romans 5:12 declares, “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.” Adam opened the gate, sin entered, and death followed like a shadow that has never left the human race. Every cemetery is a commentary on Genesis 3. Every obituary is a reminder that the serpent lied. Every wrinkle, hospital room, funeral procession, and open grave announces that death reigns in Adam’s kingdom. But physical death is only the visible end of a deeper spiritual ruin. Adam could reproduce natural life after his kind, but he could not transmit the spiritual fellowship he had forfeited. Genesis 5:3 says that Adam “begat a son in his own likeness, after his image.” Seth was not born in the unfallen condition Adam originally possessed. He arrived in the likeness of a fallen father, under the reign of sin and death. Flesh can reproduce flesh, but fallen flesh cannot beget spiritual life. Adam’s descendants did not inherit a slightly damaged religious instinct

that could be repaired through education. They inherited a nature already turned away from God, and each descendant confirms the inheritance by choosing sin for himself.

Death in Scripture involves separation, not annihilation. James 2:26 says, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” At physical death, the body is separated from the spirit. The body remains present, but the life has departed. Spiritual death likewise involves separation from the life and fellowship of God. The sinner still possesses personality, consciousness, intelligence, and a human spirit, but he is dead Godward. He lives biologically while remaining alienated spiritually. First Timothy 5:6 describes a widow who “liveth in pleasure” and says she “is dead while she liveth.” Her physical life did not cancel God’s verdict concerning her spiritual condition. A lamp may remain beautifully polished, possess an expensive shade, and sit in the finest room of the house, but if it is disconnected from the source of power, it gives no light. Fallen man has spent six thousand years polishing the lamp, redesigning the shade, and arguing about the furniture while refusing the only Source of life. Adam’s sin unplugged the human race from communion with God, and no amount of natural refinement can reconnect what sin separated.

2. Alive to the World and Dead Toward God

Man is a threefold being. First Thessalonians 5:23 speaks of “your whole spirit and soul and body,” and Hebrews 4:12 distinguishes “soul and spirit” as surely as it distinguishes “the joints and marrow.” The body connects man with the physical world through his senses. The soul is the seat of personal identity, consciousness, desire, affection, and will. The human spirit was designed for communion with God, but in fallen man it is dead Godward, alienated from the life that comes from above. Modern religious philosophy tends to stir body, soul, and spirit together into a doctrinal bowl of oatmeal and then calls the mixture profound because nobody can identify the ingredients. The King James Bible makes the distinctions. The body can be alive while the man is spiritually dead. The soul can think, desire, fear, remember, and choose while possessing no eternal life. The spirit can exist while remaining dead in relation to God, just as the prodigal son existed in the far country while his father said, “this my son was dead, and is alive again.” The sinner’s problem is not nonexistence. His problem is separation from the God whose life he needs.

Because fallen man remains physically and mentally active, he resents being called dead. He points to his accomplishments as though activity disproves the verdict. He builds cities, composes music, develops medicine, paints masterpieces, writes books, explores the earth, raises families, constructs governments, and sends religious committees around the world. Yet none of that proves spiritual life. Maggots can move inside a corpse without resurrecting it. Activity is not life in the biblical sense under discussion. A factory may roar

with machinery while producing nothing fit for its intended purpose. Likewise, natural man can remain furiously active while missing the purpose for which God created him. His mind may investigate the laws governing creation while suppressing the testimony of the Lawgiver. Romans 1 says men “became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” They professed themselves wise and became fools. Intellectual motion without spiritual life resembles a man running at full speed on a treadmill inside a morgue: impressive movement, considerable energy, and no progress toward the land of the living.

First Corinthians 2:14 explains the spiritual inability produced by this condition: “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him.” The verse does not say merely that he has not yet received enough religious education. It says he “receiveth not.” Spiritual truth is foreign to his nature. He may analyze biblical grammar, study ancient history, lecture on religious sociology, and earn degrees by discussing a Book he does not believe, but he cannot receive the things of the Spirit as living truth without the Spirit’s work. A blind man may memorize a textbook on color and pass a written examination, yet still never see blue. Likewise, the unregenerate scholar may know what Christians have said about inspiration, atonement, resurrection, and judgment without seeing their glory or submitting to their authority. The dead spirit handles revelation as information rather than life. That is why an old woman with an eighth-grade education and a believing heart can understand truths that escape a professor surrounded by Hebrew lexicons. The difference is not the size of the intellect. The difference is life. A living child can hear his Father’s voice; a dead theologian can only examine the sound waves.

3. The Walking Dead Follow the Course of This World

Ephesians 2:1 says sinners are dead, yet verse 2 says, “Wherein in time past ye walked.” There is no contradiction. The passage describes the walking dead: physically active, socially involved, religiously capable, and spiritually lifeless. Their walk follows “the course of this world.” A course is a channel, direction, or established path. Fallen men congratulate themselves for independent thought while traveling in a procession organized before they arrived. They adopt the world’s values, admire the world’s heroes, repeat the world’s slogans, chase the world’s prizes, fear the world’s disapproval, and eventually lie down in the world’s cemeteries. The fashions change, the technology improves, and the slogans receive updated paint, but the course remains rebellion against God. One generation worships a carved idol; another worships a screen. One bows before Baal; another bows before public opinion. One sacrifices children in a valley; another does it in a clinic and invoices the taxpayer. Civilization changes the instruments while the same dead nature plays the music.

The course of this world is not morally neutral. Ephesians 2:2 identifies its unseen ruler: “according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Satan does not need every sinner to wear black robes, draw pentagrams, or openly confess allegiance to him. He is satisfied when men follow a world arranged in opposition to God. The devil’s finest work rarely smells of sulphur; it smells of respectability, progress, enlightenment, tolerance, and human advancement. He does not always tempt men to become obviously monstrous. Sometimes he merely encourages them to become successful without God, moral without Christ, spiritual without Scripture, and religious without regeneration. Satan understands that a corpse wearing a choir robe remains in his cemetery just as surely as a corpse lying in the gutter. He will gladly help a man build a religion that discusses love, service, community, dignity, and human potential, provided that religion never tells him he is dead and points him to the blood of Jesus Christ. The devil is not opposed to religion. He has operated some of the largest religious establishments in history.

The “spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” gives the world a common direction despite its countless outward divisions. Men disagree about politics, economics, philosophy, culture, and ritual, yet unite when God’s authority is challenged. Herod and Pilate became friends over the rejection of Jesus Christ. Pharisees and Sadducees argued about resurrection until the Resurrection stood before them, and then they found common ground in wanting Him dead. The flesh can tolerate a thousand religions because contradictory roads allow every traveler to remain his own authority. What it cannot tolerate is Christ saying, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” That sentence closes the religious shopping mall and leaves one door open. The world calls that narrow because spiritual death always interprets exclusivity as arrogance when God declares it. Yet the same world trusts one correct blood type during a transfusion, one correct antidote for a poison, and one correct runway when landing an airplane. Men only become broad-minded when the destination is heaven. A dead man will demand fifty roads to life while refusing the One who rose from the grave.

4. The Flesh Can Dress the Corpse

Ephesians 2:3 says that before salvation believers had their conversation “in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” Sin therefore operates through more than bodily appetite. There are “desires of the flesh” and “of the mind.” The flesh can wallow in drunkenness, immorality, gluttony, violence, and sensuality, but the mind can wallow in pride, envy, unbelief, vanity, intellectual arrogance, and self-righteousness. Religious people usually condemn the first list because those sins stain the carpet and embarrass the congregation. They tolerate the second because mental sins can wear

polished shoes, carry a study Bible, and speak in complete sentences. But pride is no more spiritual because it learned Greek, and unbelief is no less wicked because it carries a doctorate. The prodigal son sinned in the far country among harlots; his elder brother sinned at home with bitterness, self-righteousness, and hatred. One smelled like the hog pen, while the other smelled like the farm, but neither enjoyed fellowship with the father. The flesh can disgrace itself openly or congratulate itself privately. Both forms proceed from the same dead nature.

Society divides sinners into respectable and disreputable classes, but God divides humanity into those in Adam and those in Christ. The respectable sinner pays his taxes, protects his reputation, supports charitable causes, and avoids scandals because he values social order. Those things benefit his neighbors, and no sensible person condemns them. But civic virtue is not spiritual life. The rich young ruler could say that he had observed the commandments from his youth, yet he walked away from Christ because his possessions owned the throne of his heart. The Pharisee in Luke 18 avoided extortion, injustice, and adultery, fasted twice in the week, and gave tithes of all he possessed. His testimony would have impressed a pulpit committee, but he went home unjustified because his faith rested in his own righteousness. Beside him stood a publican who could only cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The respectable man presented his résumé; the guilty man asked for mercy. God justified the beggar and rejected the applicant. Heaven is not a corporation hiring the least defective descendants of Adam. It is a kingdom entered by birth.

Ephesians 2:3 concludes that fallen men "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." "By nature" destroys the notion that man begins spiritually neutral and gradually becomes lost through bad influences. Environment affects conduct, but it does not create the fallen nature. Put Adam's child in a palace, and he sins with royal advantages. Put him in a hut, and he sins with fewer accessories. Give him wealth, and his corruption buys influence; give him poverty, and his corruption complains that opportunity was denied. The problem travels inside him. Romans 8:7 says, "the carnal mind is enmity against God," not merely ignorant of God or uncertain about God. "For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The next verse concludes, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." That "cannot" is the locked door human religion keeps trying to pick. The flesh may please parents, employers, voters, neighbors, and religious officials, but it cannot please God because its nature is contrary to Him. Adam's finest suit cannot change Adam's bloodline. A dressed corpse may offend the eye less than an undressed one, but clothing has never defeated death.

5. Religion Operates a First-Class Funeral Home

Jesus told the church at Sardis, “thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Revelation 3:1). There is the title of this entire condition written by the Lord Himself. Sardis possessed a name, a reputation, and an outward appearance of life, but Christ pronounced the congregation dead. Men saw activity; Christ saw a corpse. Men read the advertising; Christ read the pulse. A church can maintain programs, committees, musical productions, youth events, conferences, building campaigns, livestreams, and a calendar crowded enough to exhaust an apostle while possessing no spiritual power. Noise is not life. Motion is not life. Attendance is not life. A wind-up toy can march across a table without possessing breath. Modern churches often measure everything that can be placed on a spreadsheet while ignoring the things only God can see. They count heads, dollars, decisions, views, clicks, campuses, and baptisms, but never ask whether dead sinners were confronted with the gospel or merely entertained inside a religious mortuary. A church may have a name known across the country and no name worth mentioning in heaven.

The Pharisees were religion’s master undertakers. Jesus said they were “like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27). They did not resemble neglected graves. They resembled freshly painted tombs. The outward surface was clean, orderly, impressive, and religious. The corruption remained inside. That is the danger of external righteousness without regeneration: the cleaner the tomb becomes, the easier it is to forget what lies beneath the paint. The drunkard may know he is ruined because the bottle has broken his home and body. The Pharisee is harder to reach because his religion has furnished the grave, installed air-conditioning, and hung certificates on the wall. He mistakes the comfort of the tomb for the possession of life. Jesus did not tell the Pharisees they needed improved public relations. He called them hypocrites, serpents, and a generation of vipers. That was not a lapse in pastoral sensitivity. It was emergency medicine. When a physician finds cancer, kindness does not require him to rename it indigestion.

Second Timothy 3:5 warns of those “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” A form possesses shape without substance. A wax apple has the correct color, size, and appearance, but bite into it and the teeth discover what the eyes missed. Religious forms can reproduce the outward pattern of Christianity while denying the power that creates life. A man can learn to pray in public, quote familiar verses, adopt conservative standards, oppose obvious wickedness, and speak about being blessed without ever trusting Jesus Christ. He may serve as deacon, teacher, musician, missionary, or minister. Religious office does not create spiritual life any more than wearing a physician’s coat creates medical knowledge. Judas occupied apostolic office, preached the kingdom, participated in miracles, and kept the money bag, yet Christ called him “a devil.” False profession can stand astonishingly close to genuine Christianity because

imitation works best when it copies the real thing carefully. The counterfeit twenty-dollar bill does not advertise itself with a clown's face. It succeeds by resembling legal currency. Likewise, spiritual counterfeits use Christian words, Christian music, Christian ceremonies, and Christian associations. Only the absence of Christ's life exposes the fraud.

6. Human Remedies Cannot Raise the Dead

Education cannot cure spiritual death because information is not life. The world assumes that wickedness continues because men do not know enough, yet Romans 1 says men "hold the truth in unrighteousness." They do not merely lack light; they suppress the light they possess. Adam sinned without a deprived childhood, corrupt neighborhood, defective government, or inadequate school system. He lived in a perfect environment, received direct instruction from God, possessed a sinless nature, and still chose the serpent's word over God's word. Increased knowledge may refine behavior, expose consequences, and improve earthly conditions, but it cannot regenerate the spirit. The educated sinner is still a sinner; he simply has more sophisticated explanations for remaining one. He may replace crude blasphemy with philosophical skepticism and call the exchange progress. He may deny God in Latin, dismiss Scripture in German, and doubt the resurrection in Greek, but multilingual unbelief is still unbelief. A library can inform a living mind, but it cannot breathe life into a dead spirit. Piling books inside a coffin does not help the occupant study.

Moral reformation cannot cure spiritual death because better conduct does not change the source from which conduct proceeds. A man may abandon drunkenness, immorality, gambling, profanity, and dishonesty for practical reasons. His family may improve, his health may recover, and his employer may finally trust him. Those changes are valuable, but they are not the new birth. Jesus spoke of an unclean spirit departing from a man whose "house" was later "swept, and garnished" but left empty. The spirit returned with seven others more wicked than himself, "and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matthew 12:44–45). The house was clean but unoccupied. Reformation swept the floor; regeneration would have supplied a new resident. Empty religion removes several visible vices while leaving the throne vacant for something worse. The sinner needs more than negative improvement. He needs Jesus Christ. A washed pig may smell better for an afternoon, but Second Peter 2:22 says it returns "to her wallowing in the mire" because washing did not change its nature. Soap cleans the hide; it does not create a sheep.

Baptism, sacraments, and church membership cannot cure spiritual death because physical ceremonies operate upon the body while the need is spiritual life. Water can wash "the filth of the flesh," but Peter plainly says baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh" as a saving bath (1 Peter 3:21). A minister may sprinkle an infant, immerse an

adult, pronounce a formula, issue a certificate, and enter a name into a register, but none of those acts forces the Holy Ghost to regenerate unbelief. Simon the sorcerer believed with the kind of belief produced by amazement, was baptized, and continued with Philip, yet Peter told him, “Thy heart is not right in the sight of God.” Religious water had touched his body without correcting his heart. The thief on the cross had no baptism, no communion, no church membership, no good works to complete, and no time to improve his reputation. He turned to Christ and received the promise, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” When religion insists that grace requires its ceremony, it places a tollbooth on the road to Calvary and appoints itself cashier. But salvation is “not of works, lest any man should boast.” A dead man cannot pay the toll, and Christ already paid the fare.

7. “But God” Opens the Grave

The two greatest words in Ephesians 2 may be “But God.” Verses 1–3 describe death, disobedience, Satanic influence, fleshly lust, and wrath. No hopeful feature appears in man. No hidden goodness begins flickering beneath the wreckage. No moral strength reaches upward for rescue. Then verse 4 turns the entire passage: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.” Salvation begins with God’s character, not man’s potential. He is rich in mercy because the sinner is bankrupt. He loves greatly because the sinner has nothing lovely enough to purchase that love. Grace does not search the cemetery for the corpse showing the most promise. It brings life to the dead. God did not save because man deserved a second chance, made a sincere effort, or presented convincing arguments. He saved “according to his mercy” (Titus 3:5). Mercy withholds the judgment deserved; grace supplies the blessing never earned. At Calvary, God did not pretend sin was harmless. He placed its judgment upon His Son. The cross is where righteousness condemned sin, mercy received the sinner, and grace opened the grave.

Ephesians 2:5 says, “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” “Quickened” means made alive. The sinner does not gradually develop spiritual life through religious practice; God quickens him. The operation is connected with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ entered death bearing our sins and emerged beyond death’s authority. The believer is joined to the risen Saviour and receives life in Him. Colossians 2:13 repeats the truth: “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” Life and forgiveness meet in Christ. The new birth is therefore not God overlooking death; it is God answering death through resurrection. Lazarus did not raise himself by concentrating on life inside the tomb. Christ cried, “Lazarus, come forth,” and the dead man obeyed because the command carried the power required. God’s word does

not merely describe life; through the gospel, the Holy Ghost imparts life to the believer. The voice that spoke light into darkness has not developed laryngitis.

This life is received through faith in Christ, not manufactured by faith as a meritorious work. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “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.” Grace is the source, faith is the means of reception, Christ is the object, and salvation is the gift. The sinner hears “the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,” believes, and is sealed with “that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13). He does not contribute moral life to the transaction. He brings sin, guilt, death, and need. Christ brings righteousness, blood, resurrection, and life. Faith simply stops arguing with the diagnosis and receives the Physician. The gospel is that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. The sinner who believes that record passes from death unto life. God does not give him a spiritual stimulant that wears off when his performance declines. He gives eternal life in His Son. Resurrection is not probation, and a quickened man is not a corpse awaiting the next sin to send him back into the coffin.

Conclusion

The natural man must accept God’s verdict before he will value God’s remedy. As long as he imagines himself merely weak, he will seek strength. If he thinks himself ignorant, he will seek education. If he considers himself uncultured, he will seek refinement. If he sees himself as socially disconnected, he will seek religious community. If he believes himself slightly immoral, he will attempt reformation. But when the Holy Ghost uses the word of God to show him that he is dead in trespasses and sins, every human remedy becomes absurd. You do not offer exercise equipment to a corpse, enroll it in night school, teach it manners, or invite it to join a committee. You call for someone with power over death. The offence of the gospel is that it strips man of every imagined contribution. It leaves no ribbon for human pride and no trophy for religious effort. The sinner does not help Christ save him any more than Lazarus helped Christ raise him. The only boasting left is “in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

A spiritual corpse in a Sunday suit may look more respectable than a spiritual corpse lying in the gutter, but both need the same Saviour. One smells of liquor; the other smells of religious cologne. One curses openly; the other prays publicly while trusting himself. One has been expelled from polite society; the other chairs its moral committees. God sees beneath the clothing, vocabulary, reputation, and ceremony. He sees whether life is present. That is why the gospel is preached to the church member as well as the criminal, the professor as well as the drunkard, the pastor’s child as well as the pagan, and the moral

neighbor as well as the public disgrace. There are no degrees of death. A man dead ten minutes is not more dead than one dead ten years. Likewise, the respectable sinner is not closer to regeneration because his coffin is cleaner. Every unsaved person stands on the same side of the words “But God,” and every saved person owes his life to the same mercy.

Jesus Christ is not offering to make your death more comfortable. He offers life. He died for your sins, was buried, and rose again, and the life He possesses is everlasting. Stop trusting your morality, baptism, church membership, religious heritage, emotional experiences, prayers, promises, and personal reforms. None of them walked out of Joseph’s tomb. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Receive God’s record concerning His Son. The moment a sinner believes the gospel, God does what no minister, institution, ceremony, or self-improvement program can accomplish: He quickens the dead, forgives the guilty, seals the believer, and makes him alive together with Christ. Religion paints the cheeks of the corpse and hopes the lighting remains dim. God throws open the grave in broad daylight and commands the dead to live. The gospel does not place a better suit on Adam’s ruined son. It gives him life in the risen Son of God.

3 of 10 — The New Birth — When God Commands the Dead to Live

Key Passage: Ephesians 2:4–10

Introduction

The new birth is an act of divine quickening, not a cooperative renovation project between God and Adam’s fallen offspring. Ephesians 2:5 says, “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)” The sentence leaves no room for the sinner to arrive with a toolbox and offer assistance. He is dead, God quickens, Christ supplies the life, and grace receives the glory. Religion dislikes that arrangement because religion survives by convincing corpses that they can improve their condition if they purchase the correct ceremony, follow the proper program, and keep their dues current. God’s verdict ruins the entire business model. Dead men cannot turn over new leaves, climb sacramental ladders, develop spiritual potential, or contribute a respectable percentage toward their resurrection. They need life from outside themselves. The gospel does not announce that God has discovered a neglected spark inside man and would like to help him fan it into flame. Scripture says fallen man is “alienated from the life of God” and dead in trespasses and sins. When God saves a sinner, He does not repair the old spiritual machinery and send Adam back onto the assembly line. He imparts the life of the

risen Christ. Salvation is not divine assistance offered to a struggling man; it is resurrection power brought to a dead one.

Lazarus supplies a vivid picture of that power. By the time Jesus arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had been in the grave four days. Martha warned, “Lord, by this time he stinketh.” That statement is considerably less flattering than most funeral sermons, but it was accurate. Lazarus was not recovering, resting, reconsidering his choices, or waiting for the proper emotional atmosphere. His body was decomposing inside a sealed tomb. Christ did not stand outside the grave offering principles for successful living. He did not ask Lazarus to move one finger as proof of sincerity, clean himself up before appearing, or promise lifelong submission before life could enter him. Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth,” and the command carried the power required to accomplish what it demanded. Life entered the dead man, and the dead man came out. Lazarus did not emerge because he had improved his condition inside the tomb; he emerged because Christ is “the resurrection, and the life.” The picture is not identical in every detail to the salvation of a believing sinner, but it reveals the indispensable truth: the power that defeats death must come from the Lord of life. A corpse has no resurrection resources hidden in its pockets.

The quickening of a sinner must also be distinguished from the religious activity commonly mistaken for it. Conviction may shake a man without saving him. Fear may drive him toward an altar without bringing him to Christ. Tears may run down his face while unbelief remains rooted in his heart. He may walk an aisle, raise a hand, repeat a prayer, sign a card, submit to baptism, join a congregation, and describe a powerful experience without ever believing the gospel. None of those actions is automatically wrong, but none possesses the power to create life. The new birth occurs when a sinner hears the word of truth, believes on Jesus Christ, and is quickened and sealed by the Spirit of God. Feelings may accompany that transaction or follow it, but feelings are the weather, not the foundation. Some storms arrive with thunder; others pass quietly. The amount of noise does not determine whether rain fell. Likewise, salvation may produce shouting in one man and silent gratitude in another, but the spiritual reality rests upon Christ’s finished work and God’s promise. Heaven does not issue eternal life according to how dramatically the nervous system responded.

1. The Voice That Reaches the Grave

Jesus said in John 5:25, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” That verse joins death, hearing, the voice of Christ, and life. It does not describe human ingenuity discovering a route out of the cemetery. It describes the voice of the Son of God penetrating

the realm of death. The same voice that commanded, “Let there be light,” can speak into a darkened human heart. The same Lord who called Lazarus from the tomb can call a sinner through the gospel. Creation began with God speaking, and the new creation begins the same way. Second Corinthians 4:6 says, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts.” Darkness did not cooperate with light by becoming slightly less dark. God commanded, and light appeared. The sinner does not prepare spiritual life by polishing his darkness until it reflects heaven. God shines through the word, and the darkness cannot manufacture or take credit for the light. Salvation begins where human boasting ends: at the creative command of God.

The written word carries the testimony of the living Son. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” God has not commissioned preachers to invent a message clever enough to stimulate life. He has commanded them to preach the word and declare the gospel. A preacher cannot quicken anyone. He may raise his voice, pound the pulpit, perspire through his shirt, quote fifty verses, and preach until the congregation’s roast burns black in the oven, but only God gives life. Yet God works through the truth proclaimed. Paul asked, “how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” The preacher is a messenger, not a spiritual magician. His responsibility is to open the King James Bible, make the gospel plain, expose sin honestly, exalt Christ completely, and leave the power where God placed it. Modern pulpits often substitute stories, comedy, political commentary, therapeutic slogans, and musical fog because they no longer trust the voice of God in the Book. A preacher without confidence in Scripture is a mailman who opens every envelope, replaces the letter with his diary, and wonders why the recipient never hears from the sender.

The voice of God also exposes before it quickens. Hebrews 4:12 declares that “the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword.” “Quick” means living. The living word enters the sinner’s conscience, divides through his excuses, and reveals the thoughts and intents of the heart. It tells the moral man that his righteousnesses are filthy rags, the religious man that his ceremonies cannot save, the intellectual man that his wisdom is foolishness with God, and the careless man that judgment is not canceled because he refuses to think about it. The Book does not flatter the patient while the disease spreads. It cuts because a surgeon who refuses to cut cancer is not compassionate; he is useless. When the word exposes spiritual death, it is preparing the sinner to stop trusting dead works and look to the living Christ. The Bible wounds pride so grace can reach need. It knocks the crutches from under Adam so the sinner will fall upon Christ. God’s sword is not cruel because it cuts; it is merciful because it refuses to let the cancer call itself health.

2. Quickenings Is Life, Not Improvement

The King James word “quicken” means to make alive. Modern versions often replace it with more ordinary language, but “quicken” gathers an entire doctrine into one sharp biblical term. It appears wherever life must be supplied by God. Jesus said, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6:63). First Corinthians 15:45 calls the last Adam “a quickening spirit.” First Timothy 6:13 speaks of “God, who quickeneth all things.” Ephesians 2:5 says God “hath quickened us together with Christ,” and Colossians 2:13 repeats that those dead in sins have been quickened together with Him. The term does not describe God persuading life to appear from within the flesh. Christ’s own verdict is that “the flesh profiteth nothing.” Religion responds by putting the flesh on a committee, giving it a title, teaching it several hymns, and hoping God will revise the statement. He will not. Nothing multiplied by religious enthusiasm remains nothing. Quickening is necessary precisely because the flesh contains no spiritual profit from which eternal life can be constructed.

Spiritual quickening is an immediate change in the sinner’s condition before God. He passes “from death unto life” (John 5:24). The verse does not say that he begins a slow migration from death and may arrive at life if his conduct remains satisfactory. God says he “is passed.” The transfer is decisive. Before believing, he is condemned; upon believing, he possesses everlasting life and “shall not come into condemnation.” Before quickening, he is alienated from the life of God; afterward, Christ is his life. Before salvation, he stands in Adam; afterward, he stands in Christ. Growth, discipleship, and practical sanctification continue throughout the Christian life, but those processes must never be confused with the instantaneous gift of life. A newborn child has much growing to do, but growth does not make him alive. He grows because he is alive. In the same manner, Bible study, prayer, obedience, service, separation from sin, and spiritual fruit do not produce regeneration. They are possible because regeneration has occurred. Religion reverses the order and spends decades teaching corpses how to grow.

The Bible also distinguishes present spiritual quickening from the future quickening of the believer’s mortal body. Romans 8:11 promises that He who raised Christ from the dead “shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” The believer’s spirit has been made alive now, while his body still awaits redemption. If he dies before the Rapture, his body returns to the dust, but the life he possesses in Christ remains secure. At Christ’s coming, the same Spirit who regenerated the inward man will quicken the mortal body. The dead in Christ will rise, and living believers will be changed. Spiritual quickening therefore begins a work whose final bodily consequence reaches beyond the grave. God does not save one-third of a man and abandon the remainder to Adam forever. The spirit is quickened, the soul is saved, and the body awaits redemption. Salvation reaches every part according to God’s order and time. The cemetery may temporarily hold the Christian’s

dust, but it does not possess the deed. The Holy Ghost has already marked the property for resurrection.

3. Made Alive Together With Christ

Ephesians 2 does not merely say that God quickened the believer; it says He “hath quickened us together with Christ.” The life given in the new birth is inseparable from the risen Saviour. Christianity is not the imitation of a dead founder’s principles. It is union with a living Head. Jesus said, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19). The believer’s life does not rest upon his ability to preserve it independently; it rests in the Christ who conquered death. Colossians 3:3 says, “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” That is a rather secure hiding place. To reach the believer’s life, the devil would need to enter heaven, overthrow God, remove Christ, and undo His resurrection. He has a better chance of finding snow in the lake of fire. The Christian’s eternal life is not stored in his feelings, performance, memory, or strength. It is “with Christ in God.” The treasure is protected by the Person who is the resurrection and the life.

Romans 6 explains that the believer is identified with Christ’s death and resurrection. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death,” and “like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” The baptism in view is the spiritual identification performed by God, of which water baptism afterward serves as a picture. First Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” The Holy Ghost places the believing sinner into Christ, and Christ’s history becomes the foundation of the believer’s standing. Christ died to sin once; the believer is to reckon himself dead indeed unto sin. Christ rose beyond death’s dominion; the believer receives newness of life. This does not mean the Christian’s flesh has become sinless or that his daily conduct automatically matches his position. Romans 6 commands him to reckon, yield, and refuse sin’s reign because the old nature remains present. But the power to walk differently arises from a life that did not exist before salvation.

Colossians 2:12–13 joins this resurrection life with “the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Salvation is God’s operation, not religion’s performance. A surgeon performs an operation upon the patient; the patient does not crawl onto the table, make the incision, remove the disease, stitch himself shut, and then compliment the surgeon for assisting. Yet religious systems regularly portray salvation as though God supplies the operating room while man performs the miracle. Scripture places the operation in God’s hands. The sinner believes in the One who raised Christ from the dead, and God quickens him together with Christ, “having forgiven you all trespasses.” Quickening and forgiveness arrive together. God does not make the sinner alive while

leaving half his sins attached to him like unpaid invoices. Christ's blood answered the entire account. The risen life is not joined to a partially condemned record. When God operates, He does not leave sin's tumor behind so religion can charge for a second procedure.

4. The Spirit Uses the Living Word

Jesus said, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). The Holy Ghost is the divine Agent of regeneration. Titus 3:5 calls salvation "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; illuminates the gospel; quickens the believing sinner; places him into the body of Christ; indwells him; and seals him unto the day of redemption. The Holy Ghost does not perform this work as an impersonal religious force, emotional electricity, or stage effect summoned by repetitive music. He is God. His work is not measured by how many people fall backward, speak incoherently, shake, shout, or generate enough noise to frighten the nursery workers. Spiritual power is demonstrated first by what the Spirit said He came to do: glorify Jesus Christ, guide into truth, convict sinners, and impart life. A meeting can produce a great deal of motion without one dead sinner being quickened. A tornado also produces motion, but nobody mistakes the wreckage for revival.

The Spirit quickens through the living word. First Peter 1:23 says believers are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." James 1:18 adds, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." The new birth is not detached from biblical truth and suspended in a fog of mystical feeling. God has joined the Spirit's operation with the word He inspired. The Spirit does not lead a sinner away from Scripture into a private revelation that contradicts the Book. He does not whisper a different gospel into the ear while Paul's gospel sits open on the table. The Spirit wrote the Book, honors the Book, and works through the Book. Religious people who boast of being "Spirit-led" while correcting, ignoring, or contradicting Scripture are following a spirit, but the capital letter is doubtful. The Holy Ghost does not suffer from multiple personalities. He will not inspire "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" on Monday and tell a religious scholar on Tuesday that the words were lost, mistranslated, or improved by his latest committee.

The word used in regeneration is especially the gospel of Christ. Ephesians 1:13 lays out the order plainly: "after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." They heard, they believed, and they were sealed. The message was not vague spirituality, moral uplift, social reform, or an invitation to make Jesus a helpful addition to an already crowded life. First Corinthians 15:3–4 defines the gospel: "that Christ died for our sins according to

the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” Christ died for our sins, not for our low self-esteem. He was buried because He truly died, and He rose because death could not hold the sinless Son of God. The gospel confronts the sinner with his guilt and presents a finished payment. When he believes that message, the Holy Ghost does not reward him for intellectual achievement. He joins him to the risen Christ and gives him life.

5. Faith Receives What Grace Provides

Ephesians 2:8 states, “For by grace are ye saved through faith.” Grace is the source; faith is the means by which the gift is received. Faith does not manufacture salvation, earn salvation, complete Calvary, or place God under obligation. Romans 4:5 says, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” The verse does not say, “To him that worketh diligently while calling the work faith.” It says, “worketh not, but believeth.” Religion has employed an army of theologians to place works back into a verse that God nailed shut. Some demand sacraments, others demand law-keeping, others demand a lifelong performance guarantee, and others insist the sinner promise a future record of total surrender before simple faith can be considered genuine. They turn the free gift of eternal life into a mortgage application requiring projected behavior for the next forty years. But God justifies “the ungodly” who believes. He does not wait for the ungodly man to become sufficiently godly so that justification will appear reasonable.

The faith that receives life has Jesus Christ as its object. The Philippian jailer asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul and Silas answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:30–31). They did not hand him a probationary contract, demand a list of promises, or tell him to spend six months proving the sincerity of his request. They preached “the word of the Lord” to him and his household, and he believed. Faith is not confidence in faith, confidence in a prayer, confidence in an aisle, confidence in baptism, or confidence in the memory of an experience. Its object is Christ. Weak faith in an almighty Saviour rests upon greater security than strong faith in a religious ceremony. A man crossing a bridge is not protected by the intensity of his confidence; he is protected by the strength of the bridge. A trembling traveler on a sound bridge is safer than a confident fool dancing on rotten boards. Assurance comes from examining Christ, not from staring at one’s faith until it looks impressive.

Saving faith also receives God’s record rather than negotiating with it. First John 5:10 says, “he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” Unbelief is not intellectual modesty. It is an accusation against God’s truthfulness. The sinner may claim he needs more evidence, more time, a stronger feeling,

or a personal sign, while God has already provided the written record and the empty tomb. Faith stops cross-examining the Judge and believes His testimony. It does not mean understanding every doctrine in Scripture before salvation. The thief on the cross did not have time to complete a correspondence course in dispensational theology. He recognized his guilt, recognized Christ's innocence and kingship, and called upon Him. Salvation is simple enough for a dying thief because Christ completed the difficult part. The cross was the work; faith receives the result. Grace hands eternal life to the empty hand, while pride keeps flexing its religious muscles and goes away empty.

6. Religious Excitement Can Imitate Life

Conviction is not the new birth. Felix trembled when Paul reasoned "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," but he answered, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). The message reached his conscience, fear entered his emotions, and his body reacted, but he postponed faith. Trembling did not quicken him. King Agrippa was "almost persuaded" to be a Christian, but almost alive is still dead. A man almost rescued from drowning is buried just as surely as one who never saw the boat. Conviction is the Holy Ghost exposing sin and pressing the truth upon the sinner; conversion occurs when the sinner believes the gospel and turns to Christ. Conviction may be deep or mild, prolonged or brief, emotional or quiet. Its purpose is not to become a treasured religious experience. Its purpose is to bring the sinner to the Saviour. A man who boasts for forty years about how powerfully he was convicted while never trusting Christ is bragging about how close the ambulance came before he refused treatment.

Remorse is not the new birth. Judas repented himself, returned the thirty pieces of silver, confessed, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," and then hanged himself. He possessed sorrow, confession, restitution, and a tragic change of mind concerning his bargain, but he did not flee to Christ for mercy. Second Corinthians 7:10 distinguishes "godly sorrow" that "worketh repentance to salvation" from "the sorrow of the world" that "worketh death." Sorrow becomes useful when it turns the sinner from self to God; sorrow trusted as payment becomes another dead work. Tears are salt water, not the blood of Christ. A man may weep because sin ruined his health, exposed his secret, destroyed his marriage, damaged his reputation, or produced consequences he cannot escape. That sorrow concerns the harvest more than the seed. The new birth does not occur because a sinner feels sufficiently terrible. It occurs because he believes sufficiently upon the Saviour who is entirely able.

Public decisions and repeated prayers are not the new birth unless faith rests in Christ. Walking an aisle can place a sinner at the front of a building; it cannot place him into the

body of Christ. Raising a hand can alert an usher; it cannot command the Holy Ghost. Signing a card gives the church office a record; it does not write a name in heaven. Repeating a prayer can express faith, but the sounds themselves possess no saving power. Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," but the surrounding passage joins the call with belief: "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart." Calling without believing is religious noise. A parrot can repeat a sinner's prayer, but nobody expects it to appear at the judgment seat of Christ. The mouth must express the heart's reliance upon Christ. Salvation is not produced by finding the correct arrangement of syllables, as though heaven were a locked safe and the preacher knew the combination. God looks upon the heart, and the issue is faith in His Son.

7. The Life God Gives Stays Alive

The life imparted through quickening is everlasting life. Jesus said, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). The verb is present possession, and the life is everlasting in quality and duration. God does not call it provisional life, conditional life, temporary life, or life-until-the-next-serious-failure. If everlasting life can end, the adjective has been robbed in broad daylight. The believer's security rests upon the nature of the life and the Person in whom it is found. First John 5:11 says, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." The life is not deposited in the flesh, where it would be corrupted by sin and failure. It is in the Son. The believer has Christ, and therefore he has life. Religion teaches the sinner to look inward and ask whether his performance has remained strong enough to keep himself quickened. Scripture tells him to look upward and ask whether Christ is still alive. The answer has not changed since the stone rolled away.

Quickening does produce real spiritual consequences, but those consequences must remain in their biblical order. The believer receives a new capacity to understand Scripture, commune with God, desire righteousness, hate sin, pray, worship, and bear spiritual fruit. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." The verse follows salvation by grace without works in verses 8–9. Good works are the result for which the saved man was created, not the price he pays to become a new creature. A fruit tree bears fruit because it is alive; tying fruit to a dead branch does not make the tree alive. Likewise, Christian conduct should follow regeneration, but imitation cannot produce regeneration. The believer may grow slowly, stumble seriously, and require correction, teaching, or chastening. His flesh remains flesh. Yet life from God creates a conflict and direction that did not exist before. Grace does not save a man because he promises good works; grace saves him and then teaches him "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly."

The Spirit who quickens also seals. Ephesians 1:13 says the believer is “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,” and Ephesians 4:30 says the sealing lasts “unto the day of redemption.” God does not breathe life into the sinner and then leave the grave open for death to drag him back inside. The Holy Ghost indwells the believer as the earnest of his inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. A saved man can grieve the Spirit, quench His working, lose fellowship, invite chastening, destroy his testimony, and suffer loss of reward, but he cannot reverse the Spirit’s regenerating work. A failure in discipleship is not a successful counter-resurrection. The believer did not quicken himself, and he cannot unquicken himself. His security rests upon God’s operation, Christ’s life, the Spirit’s seal, and the promise of the God who cannot lie. If salvation depended upon the flesh maintaining what the Spirit began, “the flesh profiteth nothing” would need an emergency revision. God made no such revision.

Conclusion

When God commands the dead to live through the gospel, He performs what religion has imitated unsuccessfully for centuries. Religion can improve the cemetery, pave the paths, polish the stones, plant flowers, organize the mourners, and hire musicians to make death sound dignified. It cannot raise one occupant. Education can inform the mind, morality can restrain conduct, law can condemn transgression, baptism can wet the body, church membership can record a name, and emotion can shake the nerves. None of them can impart life. Only God quickens. That truth humiliates human pride because it leaves the sinner with nothing to contribute except the death from which he needs deliverance. But what crushes pride comforts faith. If salvation depended upon your ability, it would be as unstable as you are. Because it depends upon Christ, it is as secure as He is. The tomb that could not hold the Head cannot finally hold those joined to His body.

The message is therefore not, “Improve yourself until God considers you alive.” It is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” He died for your sins, was buried, and rose again. He satisfied the judgment, paid the debt, conquered the grave, and now offers eternal life as a free gift. Do not confuse familiarity with faith. You may know the gospel’s vocabulary, admire its morality, defend its cultural influence, and remain dead. A man can memorize the address of a hospital while bleeding to death in the parking lot. The question is whether you have received the One of whom the gospel speaks. God is not asking you to promise a flawless future, manufacture adequate sorrow, produce a dramatic conversion story, or help complete Calvary. He is commanding you to believe His record concerning His Son. Faith does not add to Christ’s work; it abandons every rival to it.

Lazarus came out of the grave because the voice of Christ carried life into death’s territory. The believing sinner is quickened because the living word declares the finished gospel, the

Holy Ghost performs the operation, and the risen Christ supplies the life. Heaven does not coach the corpse, negotiate with the coffin, or offer death a compromise. God gives life. That life creates a new creature, establishes a new standing, begins a new walk, guarantees a future resurrection, and lasts as long as Jesus Christ lives. The sinner brings an empty hand; grace fills it. He brings guilt; Christ supplies righteousness. He brings death; God commands life. The gospel is not good advice shouted into a cemetery. It is good news from the One who walked out of His own grave carrying the keys.

4 of 10 — The New Birth — The Seed That Cannot Rot

Key Passage: 1 Peter 1:22–25

Introduction

Every natural birth begins with seed, and every seed reproduces according to its nature. That law was established in Genesis before Adam ever discovered how quickly one bite could turn a garden into a graveyard. Grass brought forth grass, trees yielded fruit “whose seed was in itself,” and every living thing reproduced “after his kind.” God did not arrange creation so that corruptible seed occasionally produced an incorruptible result. Human seed produces human life, flesh produces flesh, and Adam’s fallen nature reproduces dying descendants. First Peter 1:23 therefore reaches to the root of the new birth when it says, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.” The contrast is not decorative theology. It explains why the first birth ends in death and why the second birth produces everlasting life. Human seed carries Adam’s corruption; divine seed carries no corruption at all. A child born through Adam enters a body already marching toward decay, but a sinner born through God’s incorruptible seed receives a life death cannot digest. The first birth arrives through bloodlines, human will, and mortal flesh. The second comes “by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” The nature of the seed determines the nature of the life. Rotten seed cannot produce an eternal harvest, and incorruptible seed cannot produce life with a cemetery date stamped upon it.

Modern religion treats the Bible as inspirational wrapping paper around an experience produced by atmosphere. The lights dim, the music swells, the speaker lowers his voice, several people become emotional, and the machinery declares that something spiritual must be happening because the nervous system responded. Meanwhile, the word of God receives ten polite minutes before being escorted out like an elderly relative who might embarrass the program. But Scripture places the word at the heart of regeneration. James 1:18 says, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.” First Peter 1:23 says the

believer is born again “by the word of God.” Ephesians 1:13 identifies “the word of truth” as “the gospel of your salvation.” Romans 10:17 says faith comes “by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The Holy Ghost does not regenerate sinners through religious mood lighting, sacramental machinery, denominational tradition, or a preacher’s charisma. He uses the truth God has spoken concerning His Son. A man may be impressed by a personality, moved by a song, frightened by a story, or soothed by a ceremony, but impression is not regeneration. The new birth is not atmosphere entering the emotions. It is incorruptible seed entering the believing heart.

The permanence of the new birth is inseparable from the permanence of that seed. First Peter does not say the believer is born by a temporary message, a decaying tradition, or a spiritual impulse that remains alive only while his behavior supports it. He is born by the word “which liveth and abideth for ever.” The next verse declares, “All flesh is as grass,” and the following verse says, “But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.” Flesh withers; the word endures. Human glory falls; the word remains. Religious institutions rise, accumulate property, decorate headquarters, rewrite creeds, and eventually become museums, but God’s word outlives the stones. The grass cannot preserve the seed; the seed preserves the life it produces. That is why eternal security is not a denominational attachment stapled onto the new birth. It is contained in the nature of the birth itself. If the seed is incorruptible, living, and abiding forever, the life produced by that seed cannot become corruptible because the believer had a bad week. Human weakness may hinder fellowship, fruitfulness, service, testimony, and reward, but it cannot make God’s incorruptible seed rot. Adam’s flesh has ruined many things, but it has never reached high enough to corrupt what God declared incorruptible.

1. Corruptible Seed Produces a Dying Race

The first birth comes through corruptible seed because it comes through Adam. First Corinthians 15:22 states, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Adam stands at the head of natural humanity, and every child born into his race inherits mortality. The delivery room may be filled with joy, but the birth certificate quietly begins a countdown toward a death certificate. That is not pessimism; it is the history of every generation since Eden. Men build hospitals to delay death, laboratories to study death, funeral homes to disguise death, cemeteries to organize death, and religions to explain death away, but death continues collecting the entire population. Romans 5:12 gives the reason: “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.” Death did not arrive because humanity lacked technological advancement. It entered because man sinned. The problem is not lodged in the environment, economy, diet, or educational system, though all may affect the length and quality of natural life. The

root lies in Adam's fallen seed. Every natural child begins with a corruptible source and therefore possesses a life the grave can touch.

Genesis 5:3 says Adam "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." By that time Adam was a fallen man outside Eden, separated from the tree of life, laboring beneath the curse, and traveling toward the dust from which his body had been formed. Seth was not begotten in the unfallen image Adam had originally enjoyed. He entered the likeness of a fallen father. Like produced like. Adam could transmit physical life, human personality, intelligence, and the capacity for earthly relationships, but he could not transmit spiritual life from God. He could not bequeath what sin had forfeited. That is why no child is born a Christian merely because both parents believe the Bible, pray faithfully, and serve in a sound church. Godly parents can provide instruction, discipline, protection, example, and repeated exposure to the gospel, but they cannot pass regeneration through blood. John 1:13 says the sons of God are born "not of blood." Salvation does not run in the bloodstream. God has no grandchildren and keeps no family membership package behind the church office desk.

First Peter 1:24 describes the entire natural order plainly: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass." Flesh can be strong, attractive, educated, decorated, elected, applauded, photographed, and placed on the cover of a magazine, but it remains grass. The athlete's strength withers, the beauty queen's face wrinkles, the scholar's mind weakens, the politician's applause fades, and the wealthy man's estate passes to someone who did not earn it. The flower may attract attention for a season, but the season is brief and the ground is waiting. Isaiah 40:6 asks, "What shall I cry?" The answer is, "All flesh is grass." That message will never win an award from the human-potential industry, but it explains why natural glory cannot support eternal hope. Men spend fortunes fertilizing grass and then behave surprised when winter arrives. God does not offer Adam's withering crop a more expensive lawn service. He offers another birth from seed that winter cannot kill.

2. God Identifies the Seed as His Word

Jesus identified the seed plainly in the parable of the sower: "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). The parable has its own setting and kingdom instruction, but the definition harmonizes perfectly with the doctrine stated by Peter and James. God's word enters human hearts as seed enters ground. The condition of the hearer matters: the devil may snatch the word away, shallow emotion may receive it briefly, worldly cares may choke its fruitfulness, or an honest and good heart may keep the word and bring forth fruit. Yet the seed itself is never blamed. The seed possesses life. The failure lies in the ground, the interference, or the response. Religious experts often treat Scripture as though the seed

must be genetically modified before modern soil can receive it. They soften judgment, remove offence, dilute doctrine, replace repentance with affirmation, and trade the gospel for advice because they imagine God's seed has become outdated. Then they wonder why their harvest consists of religious weeds wearing name tags. Changing the seed does not improve the harvest; it guarantees a counterfeit one.

Hebrews 4:12 declares, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful." "Quick" means alive. The Book is not a religious corpse preserved beneath museum glass. It is living because the God who spoke it lives. It cuts because truth is sharper than man's excuses. It pierces "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit," reaching places psychology can only rename and medication can never regenerate. It discerns "the thoughts and intents of the heart," exposing motives hidden from friends, family, congregations, and sometimes from the sinner himself. A man may approach Scripture intending to examine it and discover that the Book has placed him beneath examination. He opens it as a critic and finds himself standing before a Judge. He handles the page while the words handle his conscience. No ordinary writing possesses that authority. The newspaper reports yesterday's confusion, the philosopher rearranges yesterday's questions, and the self-help author sells yesterday's common sense in a new cover. The word of God speaks from eternity, tells man where he came from, exposes what he is, announces where he is going, and reveals the only Saviour who can change the destination.

Jesus said, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). The life is not in ink as a magical substance, paper as a sacred object, or leather as religious furniture. A closed Bible on a coffee table does not regenerate the household by proximity. The life resides in the words God has spoken and in the truth those words communicate concerning Christ. That is why exact words matter. God did not promise to preserve general religious impressions, approximate doctrinal themes, or whatever a committee thinks He probably intended. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). The God who bases the new birth upon His word is not careless about preserving it. It would be a strange Father who commanded His children to live by every word proceeding from His mouth and then allowed those words to disappear before they arrived. The living God gave living words, and heaven does not mail incorruptible seed in a package labeled "contents uncertain."

3. Begotten With the Word of Truth

James 1:18 says, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." The new birth originates in God's will, operates through God's word, and produces life belonging to God's new creation. Man does not beget himself. No child decides to conceive himself, chooses his ancestry, or assists his parents

in producing the seed from which he comes. Likewise, the sinner does not manufacture spiritual life from natural resources. The will of the flesh cannot produce it, and the will of man cannot authorize it. God begets through “the word of truth.” That phrase eliminates every religious lie offered as a saving instrument. Error may produce converts to a denomination, devotees to a personality, customers for a ministry, and defenders of a tradition, but it cannot beget sons of God. False seed produces false profession. Only truth about the true Christ, the true gospel, the true condition of man, and the true work of Calvary can stand in the birth God performs.

First Peter 1:23 is equally exact: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.” The verse does not say born again by church tradition accompanied by the word, by water activated through the word, by a priest authorized to administer the word, or by good works inspired by the word. It says “by the word of God.” Religion reads simple statements and immediately begins searching for a ceremonial crowbar with which to pry human authority back into them. If God says faith, religion adds works. If God says grace, religion adds merit. If God says Christ, religion adds an institution. If God says word, religion adds tradition. Soon the free gift is buried beneath enough ecclesiastical freight to require a forklift. Peter allows no such cargo. The seed is incorruptible, the instrument is the word, and the resulting birth comes from God. A church may preach that word, a missionary may carry it, a parent may teach it, and a friend may explain it, but the authority and life belong to the seed, not the hand that scattered it.

The word first acts upon the sinner by exposing his true condition. Romans 7:7 says, “I had not known sin, but by the law.” The law cannot regenerate, but it identifies the disease and closes the mouth of self-righteousness. Romans 3:20 says, “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” The gospel then reveals the remedy the law could never provide. A farmer must break stubborn ground before seed settles deeply, and God’s word breaks human pride by declaring, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” It exposes the moral man, religious man, educated man, and careless man as descendants of the same fallen Adam. The word removes the mask before presenting the Saviour. Modern preaching often skips the diagnosis because it fears the patient may leave the office offended. It offers resurrection to men who have never admitted they are dead and forgiveness to men who consider sin an outdated word. The result is a generation of professors who accepted a cure for a disease they never believed they had. A gospel without the biblical diagnosis produces converts who think Christ came to improve their lifestyle rather than save their souls.

4. The Gospel Is the Saving Message of the Seed

The saving word is not a vague appeal to believe something religious. Paul defined the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4: “that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” Every part matters. “Christ” identifies the Saviour: the promised Messiah, God manifest in the flesh, the sinless Son. “Died for our sins” identifies the substitution: He took the judgment guilty men deserved. “Was buried” confirms the reality of His death. “Rose again” announces His victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave. “According to the scriptures” anchors the whole message in God’s written revelation rather than private visions, religious legends, or clerical inventions. The gospel is news about a finished event, not advice about an unfinished human project. Christ did not begin salvation and leave Adam to complete the paperwork. He cried, “It is finished,” and the resurrection placed heaven’s receipt upon the payment.

Romans 10 joins that gospel with hearing and believing: “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” The preacher does not create the seed; he carries it. He does not add life to the message; he announces the life already in Christ. His responsibility is not to make the gospel more marketable by removing blood, judgment, sin, hell, or the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ. A seed salesman who scrapes away the living germ to improve the appearance of the package has nothing left worth planting. Yet that is what modern religion does when it presents Christ as a life-enhancing option instead of the only Saviour of condemned sinners. Romans 10:17 concludes, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Faith is not generated by repetition, volume, emotional pressure, or psychological manipulation. It arises as the sinner hears God’s testimony and trusts the Christ revealed in it.

Ephesians 1:13 gives the Church Age order without denominational fog: “after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.” They heard the gospel, believed in Christ, and were sealed by the Holy Ghost. No baptism appears between believing and sealing. No sacrament completes the transaction. No waiting period allows church authorities to inspect the convert’s future performance. The Holy Ghost seals “after that ye believed.” That order matters because false systems regularly reverse, rearrange, or clutter it. Some claim regeneration precedes faith so completely that the sinner must already possess spiritual life before believing the message that brings life. Others claim water or works must follow faith before God finishes saving. The verse permits neither theological detour. The word is heard, Christ is believed, and the believer is sealed. God does not hide salvation behind a maze when He commands sinners to be saved. Men build the maze because gatekeepers need something to manage.

5. The Holy Ghost Gives the Increase

The word is the seed, but the Holy Ghost performs the life-giving operation. Jesus said, “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6), and Titus 3:5 calls salvation “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” The Spirit does not compete with the word, operate independently of the word, or contradict the word. He inspired the Scriptures and applies their truth. He convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment; illuminates the gospel; quickens the believing sinner; places him into Christ; indwells him; and seals him. The word without the Spirit is not defective seed, but fallen man will not receive spiritual truth without divine conviction and illumination. The Spirit without the word is not biblical Christianity but mystical fog in which every private impression claims heaven’s signature. God joined the Spirit and the word, and religious confusion begins when men attempt to divorce what God joined.

Paul described the preacher’s place in 1 Corinthians 3:6–7: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” Paul was an apostle, Apollos was an eloquent preacher mighty in the Scriptures, and neither claimed the power to produce life. “So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” That statement would deflate many ministry publicity departments until they could fit beneath the offering plate. The preacher may plant faithfully, the teacher may water carefully, and the evangelist may labor earnestly, but God gives the increase. Personality cannot regenerate. Eloquence cannot regenerate. Education cannot regenerate. A famous name cannot regenerate. The preacher is a sower carrying another Person’s seed into another Person’s field and depending upon another Person’s power for the harvest. When he begins advertising himself as the source of life, he has mistaken the seed bag for a throne.

Divine agency does not erase human responsibility. Hebrews 4:2 says the word preached did not profit certain hearers because it was “not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” The seed was true, the message was preached, and the hearers remained unbelieving. The fault did not lie in God’s word. A locked heart refused what the word declared. Scripture never teaches the sinner to sit in unbelief waiting for a mysterious sensation proving God has regenerated him before he believes. It commands, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” The Holy Ghost convicts through the word, and the sinner is responsible to believe the record God has given of His Son. Faith contributes no merit; it receives mercy. Rejecting the seed does not prove the seed lacked life. It proves unbelief preferred the grave. The sun can shine brilliantly while a man closes the shutters and complains about darkness.

6. Religion Plants Counterfeit Seed

Tradition is corruptible seed because it comes through corruptible men. Jesus told the Pharisees, “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:9). Their tradition appeared religious, possessed historical pedigree, and was defended by recognized authorities, but it made “the word of God of none effect.” Age does not transform error into truth. A lie can grow a beard, learn Latin, wear embroidered garments, and survive fifteen centuries without acquiring one ounce of divine life. Religious institutions preserve customs because customs preserve the institutions, but regeneration comes through God’s truth, not the institution’s memory. When tradition contradicts the Book, tradition is not a supplementary seed; it is a weed. Rome may boast of apostolic succession, Orthodoxy may burn ancient incense, and Protestant denominations may idolize their confessions, but none receives authority to correct the words by which God begets His children. The church was born through the word; the word was not born through the church.

Sacramental machinery is also counterfeit seed. Water baptism pictures identification with Christ, and the Lord’s supper remembers His death, but neither ceremony contains spiritual life capable of regenerating unbelief. Water can touch the body, bread can enter the stomach, and wine or grape juice can pass the lips, but physical elements cannot produce a spiritual birth. “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.” Simon the sorcerer was baptized and remained in the bond of iniquity. Judas ate at the table with Christ and remained the son of perdition. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before baptism, while the thief entered paradise without either ordinance. Religion nevertheless keeps building machines that require a priest, correct formula, approved element, authorized administrator, and institutional membership before grace is permitted to operate. That is not a free gift; it is a franchise. The gospel saves a dying thief where no priest, pool, altar, or denomination can reach him because the incorruptible seed does not need ecclesiastical plumbing.

Religious atmosphere and human personality make equally poor seed. A gifted preacher may move emotions, a talented singer may produce tears, and a crowded altar may generate pressure, but none of those responses proves regeneration. The sinner may admire the messenger without believing the message. The Corinthians divided around Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, but Paul asked, “Was Paul crucified for you?” The preacher did not die for the sinner, rise from the dead, or supply eternal life. His voice may crack, his illustrations may sparkle, and his sermons may fill auditoriums, but if he substitutes himself for the word, he is planting autographed sawdust. The same applies to religious experiences built upon private revelations, dreams, visions, and inner voices. God has given an enduring word by which the gospel is preached. An experience requiring Scripture

to be corrected is not deeper spirituality; it is rebellion with goose bumps. God's seed needs no celebrity endorsement, theatrical lighting, or mystical fertilizer.

7. The Seed Remains Because It Cannot Rot

First John 3:9 states, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him." The verse does not teach that a Christian's flesh becomes sinless, for the same apostle wrote, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:8), and, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1). The distinction lies between the old nature and the new man born of God. The flesh remains corrupt and capable of every sin it committed before salvation. The new man is "created in righteousness and true holiness" and cannot sin because it proceeds from God's incorruptible seed. The believer therefore possesses two natures at war: flesh that cannot be improved into holiness and a new man that cannot be corrupted into sin. Confusing those natures produces either sinless-perfection nonsense or despair over every failure. The flesh sins; the new man agrees with God against that sin. The conflict does not prove the birth failed. It proves another nature now occupies the house.

John adds the reason: "his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The seed remains. It does not visit temporarily, survive until the believer fails, and then depart carrying eternal life in a suitcase. "Remaineth" is God's answer to every system that makes the new birth reversible. The seed is incorruptible in 1 Peter, remains in 1 John, and produces life in Christ that is called eternal throughout the Gospel of John. To lose salvation, the believer would need God's seed to stop remaining, become corruptible, cease living, and contradict the written word. Human sin is serious enough to ruin fellowship, invite chastening, destroy testimony, shorten earthly life, and consume reward at the judgment seat of Christ. It is not powerful enough to alter the nature of God's seed. Sin may damage the branch's fruit, but it cannot rewrite the tree's ancestry.

First Peter 1:25 concludes, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Peter does not leave the enduring word suspended in abstract theology. He connects it directly with the gospel preached to sinners. The message endures because its Author endures, its Christ lives, its blood avails, and its resurrection cannot be reversed. The believer's salvation is therefore anchored outside the weather system of human performance. His emotions may wither like grass, his strength may fail, his understanding may grow slowly, and his service may pass through seasons of weakness, but the word that begat him remains unchanged. God does not preserve His child because the child keeps the seed alive. The seed keeps the child because the seed lives and abides forever. Eternal security is not the believer holding tightly enough to God; it is God's incorruptible life remaining in the believer.

Conclusion

The two births begin with two different seeds and end with two different destinies.

Corruptible human seed brings a child into Adam's dying race. Incorruptible divine seed brings a believer into the family of God. The first produces flesh that withers like grass; the second produces a new man created in righteousness and true holiness. The first carries sin and mortality toward the grave; the second carries eternal life beyond the reach of the second death. A sinner cannot change the outcome of the first seed by refining the flesh it produced. Education, morality, culture, religion, baptism, and church membership may alter outward conduct, but none changes ancestry. Adam in a choir robe is still Adam. The sinner needs another birth from another seed. God does not graft eternal fruit onto Adam's dead tree and hope the glue survives winter. He plants incorruptible seed and creates life after its own nature.

That seed reaches the sinner through the gospel. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. The sinner hears the word of truth and believes on Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost quickens him, places him into Christ, seals him, and gives him eternal life. There is no merit in the hearing ear or empty hand of faith. All merit belongs to Christ. The word does not save because the sinner mastered its vocabulary, admired its beauty, or inherited a family Bible. It saves as the Spirit uses its truth to bring the believing sinner to the risen Son of God. Do not trust a ceremony surrounding the word, a tradition competing with the word, or an experience contradicting the word. Trust the Christ revealed by the word. The seed points away from man's effort and toward God's finished work.

Grass withers, flowers fall, bodies age, institutions decay, empires collapse, denominations drift, scholars die, and human glory becomes another paragraph in a forgotten history book. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever." That word declares the gospel, reveals the Saviour, creates faith in the hearer, and becomes the incorruptible seed of the new birth. The believer may be weak, but the seed is not. His flesh may fail, but the seed does not rot. His emotions may tremble, but the seed does not change. His service may require correction, but the seed remains. The first birth came from seed already carrying death; the second comes from seed death has never touched. Religion keeps trying to preserve dying grass. God plants something the grave cannot compost.

5 of 10 — The New Birth — God Does Not Repair the Old Man

Key Passage: Titus 3:3–7

Introduction

Titus 3:5 delivers one of the clearest blows ever struck against human merit: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” The Holy Ghost did not say salvation is not by wicked works, dishonest works, pagan works, or obviously defective works. He excluded “works of righteousness.” That shuts the door on the sinner’s best behavior, finest intentions, cleanest habits, most expensive charities, longest prayers, deepest religious vows, and most impressive public reforms. God is not sorting through Adam’s moral junkyard hoping to find several parts worth installing in the new man. He has already examined the entire inventory and pronounced it corrupt. Romans 3:12 says, “there is none that doeth good, no, not one,” while Isaiah 64:6 declares that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” The problem is not that human righteousness needs polishing before God accepts it. The problem is that it comes from the wrong nature. Adam’s fallen flesh can produce civic virtue, family loyalty, religious discipline, charitable activity, and outward respectability, but it cannot produce the righteousness of God. A rotten tree may bear fruit that looks better than the fruit on the neighboring rotten tree, but heaven does not award eternal life to the least worm-eaten apple in the basket.

Regeneration is not renovation. God does not approach the old man as a contractor approaching a damaged house, hoping to preserve the foundation while replacing several rotten boards. Scripture says the foundation itself stands in Adam, and “in Adam all die” (1 Corinthians 15:22). The old man is not a good structure suffering from several unfortunate leaks. Ephesians 4:22 says he “is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” The verb does not suggest that corruption is merely approaching from outside; corruption characterizes the structure. Paint the walls, install religious carpet, hang several Bible verses in the hallway, and the termites remain in the beams. Human religion specializes in curb appeal. It straightens the shutters, plants moral flowers, replaces the mailbox, and tells visitors the property has been spiritually restored. God looks through the paint and condemns the building. Salvation is not the Holy Ghost helping Adam pass inspection. It is God creating “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” The old man is not scheduled for rehabilitation; he is identified with Christ’s crucifixion. God did not send His Son to Calvary because Adam needed remodeling advice.

The distinction between regeneration and reformation must remain sharp because confusing them produces either self-righteous religion or counterfeit conversion. Reformation changes conduct; regeneration imparts life. Rehabilitation may train a man to manage destructive habits; regeneration changes his spiritual condition before God. Moral discipline may restrain the flesh; regeneration creates a new man. Religious education may

teach the sinner Christian vocabulary; regeneration makes him alive to the God of whom that vocabulary speaks. Gradual sanctification develops the walk of a man already saved; regeneration occurs when God saves him. These truths are related, but they are not interchangeable theological labels floating in the same bowl. A drunkard may abandon alcohol without receiving Christ. A thief may return stolen property without being justified. A profane man may stop cursing because his employer threatened dismissal. Those changes are good, but improved behavior cannot beget its performer. A dog that quits barking has not become a sheep; it has become a quieter dog. The sinner needs more than restrained Adam. He needs life in Jesus Christ.

1. The Old Man Is Corrupt Beyond Repair

Paul's description of the old man is not gentle: "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22). Corruption reaches deeper than isolated acts. Sinful deeds are fruit; the old nature is the root. Men imagine they become sinners only after accumulating a sufficient number of bad choices, but Scripture traces those choices back to the nature from which they proceed. Jesus said, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders" (Mark 7:21). The outward act begins within. The hand steals because covetousness has already occupied the heart. The mouth lies because deceit has already found a home inside. The body commits adultery because lust first prepared the room. Society attempts to control the fruit through laws, penalties, education, and public shame, but none of those instruments changes the root. They may restrain conduct, and restraint is necessary in a fallen world, but a cage does not change the nature of the animal inside it.

Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Modern religion advertises the heart as the sinner's most trustworthy spiritual compass. It tells him to follow his heart, listen to his heart, trust his heart, and discover the goodness hidden in his heart. God looks at the same organ and calls it deceitful above all things. That is not a minor difference of professional opinion. It is the Creator contradicting the greeting-card industry. The heart is not merely deceived; it is deceitful. It does not only receive lies; it manufactures them, especially lies about itself. It convinces the sinner that good intentions erase disobedience, sincerity transforms error into truth, and comparison with worse men establishes righteousness. A compass pointing toward itself cannot guide a traveler home. The old nature cannot accurately diagnose its own corruption because deception is one of its symptoms.

Romans 8:7–8 closes the repair shop completely: "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." The carnal mind is not simply unfriendly toward God or

temporarily confused about God. It is “enmity.” It refuses subjection and lacks the natural capacity to please Him. Religion responds by teaching the flesh to kneel, sing, fast, donate, volunteer, and wear conservative clothing, hoping activity will persuade God to revise “cannot” into “sometimes can.” But the verse remains. The flesh can perform religious acts for pride, fear, reputation, family pressure, social advantage, or the hope of earning heaven, yet none of those motives turns flesh into spirit. You may teach a vulture to perch on a church steeple, but its appetite remains in the cemetery. God does not reform enmity into sonship. He creates life where enmity ruled.

2. The Cross Is an Execution Site, Not a Repair Shop

Romans 6:6 says, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him.” God’s answer to the old man is crucifixion, not counseling. The cross was not a spiritual workshop where Christ improved Adam’s prospects. It was the place where God judged sin in the flesh. The old man deserved death, and the believer’s identification with Christ’s death places God’s sentence upon that old nature. Calvary exposes every optimistic theory about human goodness. If man could have been educated into righteousness, God could have sent a professor. If he could have been governed into righteousness, God could have sent a politician. If he could have been inspired into righteousness, God could have sent a poet. God sent His Son to die because sin required blood, judgment, and death. The cross is God’s final answer to every proposal for renovating Adam. Heaven did not misplace the estimate; the building was condemned.

The crucifixion of the old man does not mean the believer’s flesh disappears or becomes incapable of sin. Paul wrote to saved people, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body” (Romans 6:12). Sin could attempt to reign because the mortal body and old nature remained present. The believer must reckon himself “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” His standing in Christ provides the basis for refusing the flesh, but practical victory requires reckoning and yielding. The old man has received God’s judicial sentence at the cross, yet the flesh continues attempting to reclaim the throne during the believer’s earthly life. That is why Christian living is warfare, not the effortless expression of sinless flesh. God did not convert the old nature. He created a new man and commanded the believer to put off the old man’s conduct. A condemned criminal may continue shouting through the bars, but the court has not restored his authority.

Galatians 2:20 gives the positive side of identification with Christ: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Paul did not describe an improved Saul of Tarsus finally using his Pharisaic training correctly. He described death with Christ and life through Christ. The religious Saul had possessed zeal, education, ancestry, discipline, and outward righteousness, but Paul gathered that entire résumé and

counted it dung “that I may win Christ” (Philippians 3:8). The cross did not polish Saul’s Pharisee badge; it knocked him into the dust and showed him the risen Lord. Everything he later became flowed from Christ’s life, not Adam’s refinement. Christianity is not the old man asking, “How can I become more impressive?” It is the believer confessing, “Christ liveth in me.” The life is not a trophy awarded to the reformed flesh. It is the possession of the new man.

3. Mercy Saves Where Righteous Works Fail

Titus 3:5 establishes the negative before the positive: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done.” God anticipates man’s favorite objection. The sinner hears that wickedness cannot save and immediately reaches for righteousness as a replacement payment. He assumes that if bad deeds condemn, enough good deeds must cancel the account. But divine judgment is not a grocery scale where several pounds of charity outweigh several ounces of adultery. One sin makes the man guilty, and later good works do not travel backward through time to erase it. A murderer who gives generously to charity after the crime has not resurrected his victim or satisfied the law. Good works are obligations, not currency with which previous rebellion is purchased. James 2:10 says, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” The law is a chain, and one broken link drops the climber regardless of how polished the remaining links appear.

Paul reinforces the exclusion of works in Romans 4:5: “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Religion reads “worketh not” and immediately begins preparing a footnote explaining which works must be added. One group brings baptism, another brings sacraments, another brings Sabbath-keeping, another brings lifelong perseverance, and another brings total surrender promised in advance. Each claims salvation is by grace while carrying a tool belt full of requirements God excluded. Paul does not say God justifies the godly man who successfully reforms himself. He justifies “the ungodly” who believes. Faith is not a superior work added to the account; it is the empty hand receiving Christ’s completed payment. The beggar does not earn the gift by opening his palm. He merely stops pretending the empty palm contains riches.

The positive foundation is “according to his mercy he saved us.” Mercy looks upon the guilty, not the deserving. If salvation were awarded according to merit, mercy would be unnecessary. Titus 3:3 has already described the recipients as foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. Verse 4 then begins, “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.” The change begins in God, not in an improved description of man.

The foolish did not educate themselves into life, the disobedient did not earn acceptance through later obedience, and the hateful did not purchase divine love by becoming pleasant. God's kindness appeared in Jesus Christ. Mercy does not pretend the sinner deserves salvation; it provides salvation despite the fact that he does not. Grace does not discover value hidden in Adam; it gives value through union with Christ.

4. The Washing of Regeneration Is Not Religious Bathwater

Titus 3:5 says God saved us "by the washing of regeneration." Sacramental religion sees the word "washing," hears water splashing in the distance, and arrives with a baptistry before the sentence finishes. Yet the verse never mentions water baptism. The washing is connected with regeneration and "renewing of the Holy Ghost," not with a human administrator, physical element, baptismal formula, or church ordinance. The context concerns God's merciful work of salvation, and the Agent named is the Holy Ghost. Water baptism pictures the believer's identification with Christ and serves as an important public testimony after faith, but a picture is not the event pictured. A photograph of food cannot feed a starving man, and a watery picture of burial and resurrection cannot create the life it portrays. The Holy Ghost regenerates; water does not.

First Corinthians 6:11 uses similar spiritual language: "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The washing there is performed "by the Spirit," not by a minister holding a candidate under water. Paul addressed people formerly characterized by fornication, idolatry, adultery, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, and extortion. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed." The change in their standing came through Christ and the Spirit. Their bodies had undoubtedly touched water many times before salvation without removing one stain from the soul. Religious people regularly confuse physical cleanliness with spiritual cleansing because ceremony gives the flesh something visible to perform. But Lady Macbeth could not wash imagined blood from her hands, and no baptistry can rinse guilt from the conscience. Only the blood of Christ cleanses from sin, and only the Spirit applies the saving work of Christ to the believer.

Ephesians 5:26 speaks of "the washing of water by the word," showing again that biblical washing language need not refer to an ordinance. The word cleanses by exposing error, renewing the mind, and bringing divine truth to bear upon the believer's life. In regeneration, God cleanses the sinner from his old standing and gives him new life. This is not literal water hidden beneath theological vocabulary. If regeneration depended upon physical water, salvation would require adequate supply, correct mode, proper administrator, and enough time to complete the ceremony. A dying man in a desert would be beyond grace, while a hypocrite near a swimming pool would enjoy a spiritual

advantage. The gospel that saved the thief on the cross needs no plumbing. Religion puts salvation into the water because it wants grace controlled by human hands. God places salvation in Christ so no religious gatekeeper can invoice the sinner for access.

5. The Holy Ghost Renews What Flesh Cannot Produce

Titus joins “the washing of regeneration” with “renewing of the Holy Ghost.” The Holy Ghost does not renew the old man by convincing corruption to become holy. He imparts spiritual life and creates a new capacity for fellowship with God. Jesus said, “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Flesh produces flesh, and Spirit produces spirit. The Holy Ghost does not crossbreed the two natures into a religious hybrid that is partly Adam and partly Christ. The believer receives a new man while still carrying the flesh until death or the Rapture. Ephesians 4:24 says the new man “after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Creation is stronger language than repair. A mechanic repairs something that already exists; a creator brings forth what did not exist before. God is not a heavenly mechanic tightening Adam’s loose bolts. He creates a new man after His own righteousness and holiness.

Verse 6 says the Holy Ghost is “shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” The blessing comes through Christ, not through human merit. The word “abundantly” also destroys the notion that God gives barely enough spiritual life to survive until the believer’s next mistake. The Holy Ghost indwells every saved person, baptizes him into the body of Christ, seals him unto the day of redemption, and becomes the earnest of his inheritance. Romans 8:9 says, “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Christianity is not divided into ordinary saved people who possess no Spirit and elite believers who later receive Him through a second religious crisis. Every believer belongs to Christ because the Spirit indwells him. Filling, yieldedness, power in service, and spiritual maturity vary greatly, but indwelling follows salvation. The Spirit does not rent a room until the believer fails to meet the lease. He seals the purchased possession until redemption day.

The once-for-all renewing connected with regeneration must be distinguished from the believer’s continuing renewal in practical sanctification. Romans 12:2 commands Christians, “be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,” while 2 Corinthians 4:16 says “the inward man is renewed day by day.” The first speaks of an ongoing transformation in thought and conduct; the second describes daily inward renewal amid outward decay. Neither means the believer is born again repeatedly. Natural birth occurs once, and spiritual birth occurs once. After birth comes growth. A child does not return to the womb each morning because he failed to obey the previous afternoon. He needs correction, nourishment, discipline, and maturity, but he does not need another birth certificate. Likewise, the Christian needs his mind renewed by Scripture, his walk corrected, his

fellowship restored after sin, and his life increasingly conformed to Christ. None of that repeats regeneration. Sanctification develops the life regeneration supplied.

6. Reformation Changes Habits but Cannot Change Nature

Reformation can accomplish valuable earthly results. A drunkard who stops drinking may preserve his marriage, employment, health, and testimony before his children. A thief who stops stealing may restore property and avoid prison. A violent man who learns restraint may spare his family tremendous suffering. Christians should never mock good conduct merely because conduct cannot save. The problem comes when improvement is mistaken for regeneration. A man may stop drinking because the doctor warned him, stop stealing because prison frightened him, and stop cursing because it damaged his business. None of those motives requires faith in Christ. Lost men can reform through willpower, fear, discipline, habit, social pressure, and concern for consequences. The flesh is capable of exchanging one behavior for another when the exchange serves its interests. It may even become proud of the reform and use morality as another reason to reject grace.

Jesus described a man from whom an unclean spirit departed. The house was left “empty, swept, and garnished” (Matthew 12:44). Everything appeared cleaner, but the house remained empty. The unclean spirit returned with seven others more wicked than himself, “and the last state of that man is worse than the first.” Reformation swept the floor; regeneration would have supplied a new occupant. The moralist removes visible wickedness but leaves the heart without Christ. He becomes cleaner, more respectable, and often more self-righteous, making him harder to reach than before. The prodigal in the hog pen knows he is ruined; the elder brother on the farm thinks his labor gives him a claim upon the father. Dirt may drive a man toward cleansing, but religious polish convinces him that no cleansing is needed. An empty house with polished windows remains available to every devil carrying furniture.

Religious education has the same limitation. It may teach sound doctrine to the mind, train the conscience, establish good habits, and protect children from many destructive influences. Parents and churches should teach the Bible diligently. But education cannot regenerate. Timothy knew the holy Scriptures from childhood, yet those Scriptures were “able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). The Scriptures pointed him to Christ; mere familiarity did not save automatically. A child can memorize John 3:16, answer every Sunday school question, win Bible drills, and remain unsaved until he personally trusts Christ. Truth stored in the memory is not identical to faith in the heart. A cookbook in the cupboard does not satisfy hunger, and a gospel verse in the mind does not save when the Christ of that verse remains rejected.

7. Regeneration Must Be Distinguished From the Rest of Salvation

Regeneration is one part of the great saving work God performs, and it must be distinguished from justification, redemption, reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. Justification concerns the courtroom: God declares the believing sinner righteous through faith in Christ. Redemption concerns purchase: Christ's blood pays the price and frees the sinner from bondage. Reconciliation concerns relationship: the former enemy is brought near to God. Adoption concerns position and inheritance: the believer receives the standing and privileges of a son. Regeneration concerns life: the spiritually dead sinner is made alive. These works occur together in salvation, but they answer different problems. God did not use several words because the Holy Ghost ran short of vocabulary exercises. Each term reveals another side of what Christ accomplished.

Titus 3:7 moves from regeneration to justification and inheritance: "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." The believer is regenerated by the Spirit, justified by grace, and made an heir. Life, righteousness, and inheritance come together through Christ. None depends upon a gradual improvement of the old nature. The sinner does not receive partial life while waiting for justification, temporary justification while working toward sonship, or probationary sonship while earning an inheritance. God saves completely. Colossians 2:10 says, "And ye are complete in him." The believer may be incomplete in knowledge, maturity, obedience, and service, but his standing in Christ is complete. Christian growth adds maturity to the believer's experience; it does not add missing pieces to Christ's finished work.

Regeneration must especially be distinguished from practical sanctification. Regeneration occurs once and gives life. Sanctification concerns the believer's growth, separation, obedience, and increasing conformity to Christ. Confusing them creates two opposite errors. One crowd insists that slow growth proves regeneration never occurred, turning fruit inspection into a second judgment seat administered by suspicious church members. Another crowd uses the permanence of regeneration as an excuse for carnality, treating grace as permission to feed the very flesh Christ condemned. Scripture supports neither. Salvation is free, eternal, and secure; discipleship is costly, daily, and accountable. A believer can lose fellowship, joy, usefulness, testimony, health, and reward without losing eternal life. God chastens His children precisely because they remain His children. The Father does not repair the old man, but He disciplines the new son who keeps listening to him.

Conclusion

God does not repair the old man because the old man is not repairable. He is corrupt according to deceitful lusts, hostile to God, incapable of pleasing God, and condemned at the cross. Human civilization may restrain him, education may inform him, morality may polish him, law may frighten him, religion may dress him, and rehabilitation may teach him better habits. None can create life. A freshly painted coffin may look splendid beneath the church lights, but improved appearance does not alter its contents. Salvation begins when the sinner stops offering God renovation plans and accepts God's verdict. Adam does not need another coat of paint. He needs to be displaced by life in Christ.

Titus 3 leaves no uncertainty about the source or nature of salvation. It is "not by works of righteousness which we have done." It comes "according to his mercy." It operates through "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The Spirit is shed abundantly "through Jesus Christ our Saviour." The believer is justified "by his grace" and made an heir "according to the hope of eternal life." Every phrase points away from human merit and toward divine accomplishment. Man supplies the guilt; mercy supplies the pardon. Man brings death; the Spirit supplies life. Man offers filthy rags; Christ supplies righteousness. Salvation is not God rewarding a successful renovation. It is God creating what Adam could never produce.

The sinner must therefore come to God through faith in Jesus Christ, not through confidence in personal improvement. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. Believe that gospel and receive the Saviour who finished the work. Do not wait until the old man becomes worthy; he never will. Do not confuse reduced sinning with remitted sin, improved habits with imputed righteousness, or religious discipline with regeneration. The Holy Ghost does not enter Adam's condemned house carrying lumber, wallpaper, and a bucket of paint. He brings the life of the risen Christ and creates a new man. Religion keeps remodeling the property God condemned; regeneration gives the sinner a new address.

6 of 10 — The New Birth — When God Creates What Religion Cannot

Key Passage: 2 Corinthians 5:14–21

Introduction

Second Corinthians 5:17 does not describe a sinner adopting Christian culture; it announces a creative act of God: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Religion can alter a man's schedule, vocabulary, wardrobe, associations, and public behavior, but it cannot create anything. It can give Adam a hymnbook, baptize him, place

his name on a church roll, teach him when to stand and sit, and persuade him to shake the preacher's hand without giving him one spark of spiritual life. A man may trade the tavern for the fellowship hall and merely become a more respectable descendant of Adam. The old creature can learn Christian manners the way a parrot learns religious phrases: the sound may be accurate while the nature remains untouched. God does something infinitely deeper. He places the believing sinner in Christ, quickens the inward man, gives him a new standing, and creates what did not exist before. Salvation is not Adam enrolled in religious night school. It is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness speaking life into Adam's ruined descendant.

The expression "in Christ" is the hinge upon which the verse turns. Paul does not say that any man near Christ, interested in Christ, impressed by Christ, baptized in Christ's name, or affiliated with people who discuss Christ is a new creature. He says, "if any man be in Christ." Position determines identity. In Adam, the sinner inherits death, condemnation, corruption, and a nature unable to please God. In Christ, the believer receives life, righteousness, acceptance, reconciliation, and a standing beyond condemnation. The difference is not a slight religious adjustment. It is the difference between two heads, two families, two kingdoms, and two destinies. The sinner does not climb out of Adam through moral effort and crawl into Christ through church ceremonies. The Holy Ghost places him into Christ when he believes the gospel. First Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." That baptism is not a preacher placing a body under water; it is the Spirit placing a believer into the body of the risen Son of God.

The new creature must be understood without two opposite errors. It does not mean the believer's flesh becomes sinless, that every habit vanishes instantly, or that spiritual maturity arrives fully grown on the afternoon of conversion. The Christian still carries an old nature, inhabits a mortal body, and must learn to walk according to the life God has given him. Yet neither does the remaining conflict make the new creature imaginary, merely symbolic, or dependent upon future performance. God has performed a real inward and positional work. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The believer has moved from Adam to Christ, death to life, condemnation to justification, distance to reconciliation, and alienation to sonship. His flesh may require daily denial, but his standing no longer waits for Adam's improvement. God did not save him by teaching the old creature to impersonate Christ. He joined him to Christ and created a new one.

1. The Creator Speaks Light Into the Heart

Paul connects salvation with the original act of creation in 2 Corinthians 4:6: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." Genesis 1 did not begin with light struggling to emerge from darkness through gradual self-development. God

said, “Let there be light: and there was light.” Darkness did not assist, negotiate, or offer creative advice. The command of God produced what the darkness could never manufacture. The new birth operates by the same divine power. The sinner’s heart is darkened, his understanding is blinded, and his spirit is dead Godward. He cannot generate spiritual light by examining his darkness more positively. God shines through the gospel and reveals “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Salvation is not man discovering a hidden light within himself. It is God shining from outside him through the truth concerning His Son.

The creative power belongs to the word of God. Hebrews 11:3 says, “the worlds were framed by the word of God,” and 1 Peter 1:23 says the believer is born again “by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” The same God who spoke creation into order uses His incorruptible word to beget spiritual life. Modern religion acts as though Scripture is raw material requiring improvement by professional communicators. It files down the edges, removes the offence, replaces doctrine with stories, and surrounds the remainder with enough entertainment to prevent anyone from noticing that God said something. Then it wonders why the congregation contains admirers instead of new creatures. A preacher cannot improve God’s seed by removing the life-bearing part. The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,” not because the messenger possesses stage presence, but because God’s truth reveals God’s Son and the Holy Ghost applies that truth to faith.

Creation also means that the resulting work belongs to the Creator. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” The believer is God’s workmanship, not his own spiritual construction project. He did not design the plan, supply the righteousness, purchase the materials, or provide the power. Christ performed the redeeming work, the Holy Ghost performed the regenerating work, and God receives the glory. Good works follow because the new creature was created “unto good works,” but those works do not crawl backward into the verse and create the creature. A painting does not paint itself so the artist will agree to sign it. The workmanship exists because the Workman acted. Religion hands Adam a brush and tells him to become worthy of God’s signature. Grace takes the brush away, creates what Adam could never produce, and signs the work with the blood of Christ and the seal of the Holy Ghost.

2. Taken Out of Adam and Placed Into Christ

First Corinthians 15:22 divides humanity between two representative men: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Every natural person begins in Adam. He inherits a fallen nature, lives under sin’s reign, and travels toward physical death because his first birth joined him to a dying head. Adam’s disobedience did not merely create a bad

example that later generations unfortunately copied. Romans 5:19 says, “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” Adam opened the door through which sin and death entered the human race. His offspring may differ in intelligence, morality, wealth, nationality, education, and religion, but all share the same natural position. One child of Adam may wear silk and another rags; both are grass headed toward the mower. One may die beneath stained glass and another beneath a tavern sign; neither location changes the family.

Jesus Christ entered history as “the last Adam” and “the second man” (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47). He did not inherit Adam’s sin, yield to Satan’s temptation, or stand under personal condemnation. He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” Where the first Adam disobeyed in a garden surrounded by provision, the last Adam obeyed in a garden beneath the shadow of the cross. Adam seized forbidden fruit and brought death; Christ drank the appointed cup and brought life. Adam hid naked among the trees; Christ hung openly upon a tree while men mocked Him. Adam blamed his bride; Christ gave Himself for His Church. The first man dragged his descendants into condemnation; the second Man provides righteousness and life to those joined to Him. Salvation does not rehabilitate the first Adam. It transfers the believer’s standing to the last Adam.

Romans 5:17 says those who receive “abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” The transfer does not depend upon the sinner manufacturing righteousness. He receives “the gift of righteousness.” Second Corinthians 5:21 explains the exchange: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Christ did not become a sinner in character; He was made sin for us in substitution, bearing the judgment our sins deserved. The believer is not made independently righteous through fleshly reform; he is made the righteousness of God “in him.” Calvary removes the condemned account, and union with Christ supplies a righteous standing. Religion offers to improve Adam’s account through installments. God closes the account and opens another in the name of His Son.

3. “In Christ” Is a Position, Not a Religious Mood

The believer enters Christ through the operation of the Holy Ghost. First Corinthians 12:13 states, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” The verse says “all,” not an elite group who later achieved a second blessing through prolonged prayer, emotional surrender, or an authorized ceremony. Every saved person is placed into the body of Christ by the Spirit. Ephesians 1:13 gives the order: the sinner hears “the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,” believes in Christ, and is sealed “with that holy Spirit of promise.” The Spirit baptism that places him into Christ occurs upon faith in the gospel. Water baptism afterward pictures identification with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, but the

picture does not create the position. A marriage photograph records a relationship; it does not produce one. A man may possess the photograph without possessing the marriage, just as a baptized professor may possess the picture without being in Christ.

Being in Christ gives the believer every spiritual blessing required for acceptance before God. Ephesians 1:3 says God “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” The verse does not say the believer earns them gradually as his performance improves. God “hath blessed us.” In Christ he is chosen, accepted, redeemed, forgiven, sealed, and given an inheritance. Colossians 2:10 adds, “And ye are complete in him.” The Christian may be incomplete in knowledge, maturity, obedience, service, understanding, and practical holiness, but he is complete in Christ. Growth cannot add to completeness; it brings the believer’s walk into greater agreement with the completeness already possessed. Religion keeps the sinner perpetually incomplete because an incomplete customer continues purchasing repairs. Grace makes the believer complete in Christ and then teaches him to live like the man God has already made him.

Position does not fluctuate with emotion. A believer may feel close to God one morning and spiritually numb by evening. He may pray with liberty one day and struggle to form a sentence the next. His assurance may be strong during a sermon and assaulted by doubt before he reaches home. None of those changes moves him in and out of Christ. Feelings describe the weather inside the soul; position rests upon God’s act. A passenger aboard a ship may suffer seasickness, lose his balance, and feel as though the world is turning upside down, but his stomach does not determine whether he remains aboard. The believer’s standing is secured by Christ’s merit, the Spirit’s baptism, and God’s promise. Fellowship may be disturbed by sin, joy may be lost through disobedience, and usefulness may be damaged by carnality, but union with Christ is not a mood ring changing color with the nervous system.

4. Old Things Are Passed Away

Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “old things are passed away.” The immediate context explains that the believer is no longer known merely “after the flesh.” Verse 16 says, “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh.” Natural distinctions do not determine spiritual standing in the new creation. Jewish ancestry, Gentile background, social rank, education, wealth, religious pedigree, and human achievement cannot provide superior access to God. Galatians 3:28 says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” The verse does not erase biological sex, earthly responsibilities, national identity, or Israel’s prophetic promises. It declares equality of spiritual standing within the body of Christ. The ground at

Calvary is level because every sinner requires the same blood and every believer receives the same Christ.

The old condemnation has passed because “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). The believer’s sins have been judged at the cross, his guilt has been answered by Christ’s blood, and his standing has changed from condemned to justified. Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Peace with God is not the same as a peaceful feeling. It is the end of legal hostility between God and the believing sinner. The Judge who once possessed every righteous charge now declares the believer righteous through Christ. The old record is not kept in a secondary drawer in case the Christian later disappoints heaven. Colossians 2:14 says Christ blotted out “the handwriting of ordinances that was against us” and took it “out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” God does not nail the accusation to the cross and then mail it back when the believer stumbles.

The old ownership has also passed. Before salvation, the sinner walked “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). He belonged to the kingdom of darkness and served sin, whether that service appeared openly wicked or respectably religious. Colossians 1:13 says God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” The believer has changed kingdoms, masters, and spiritual citizenship. Sin may still tempt him, the world may still pressure him, and Satan may still accuse him, but none retains rightful ownership. The old landlord may rattle the windows and demand rent, but the deed has changed hands. The Christian’s duty is to stop living as though the former owner still possesses the property.

5. Behold, All Things Are Become New

The word “behold” demands that the reader look at God’s accomplishment. “Behold, all things are become new.” The new creature has a new relationship with God. The condemned sinner now knows God as Father through Jesus Christ. Romans 8:15 says believers have received “the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Prayer is no longer a stranger submitting religious paperwork to a distant tribunal; it is a child approaching the throne of grace through the access provided by Christ. Ephesians 2:18 says, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are all involved in that access. No priest, saint, shrine, sacrament, or ecclesiastical switchboard is required to connect the believer with heaven. Christ is the one Mediator, the Spirit gives access, and the Father receives His child.

The believer also possesses a new relationship to Scripture. Before regeneration, the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, “for they are foolishness unto him” (1 Corinthians 2:14). After salvation, the indwelling Spirit opens spiritual understanding and creates hunger for truth. This does not mean the Christian instantly understands every difficult passage or no longer needs teachers. It means the Book is no longer merely an external religious artifact. It speaks with the voice of his Father, reveals the glory of his Saviour, exposes the workings of his flesh, and supplies nourishment for the new man. First Peter 2:2 tells newborn babes to “desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Desire may need cultivation, and carnality can dull the appetite, but life makes growth possible. A dead man does not become hungry; appetite is evidence that something lives.

The new creature has a new destination and hope. The natural man lives beneath the shadow of death, accumulating possessions he cannot keep and constructing plans the grave will interrupt. The believer’s life is “hid with Christ in God,” and Colossians 3:4 promises, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” His body remains mortal, but it has been purchased and awaits redemption. Philippians 3:21 says Christ “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” Salvation therefore reaches beyond the inward man to a future bodily transformation at Christ’s coming. God begins with regeneration, continues through practical sanctification, and will complete the outward work through glorification. The new creature is not headed toward extinction but manifestation. Adam’s grave may temporarily receive the dust, but Christ has already scheduled an eviction.

6. The New Creature Still Carries the Old Flesh

The new creature does not mean the believer’s flesh has become new. Paul wrote years after salvation, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). The parenthetical statement is one of the most important distinctions in the Christian life. Paul did not say no good thing existed anywhere in him, for Christ and the Holy Ghost dwelled within him. He identified the location of corruption: “in my flesh.” The new man is created in righteousness and true holiness; the flesh remains corrupt. Sinless-perfection teachers erase the parenthesis, announce that their flesh has become sanctified beyond sin, and then spend the rest of their ministry redefining pride, dishonesty, envy, and temper so the evidence will stop contradicting the doctrine. Paint a skunk white and call it sanctified if you wish, but the next warm afternoon will settle the argument.

Galatians 5:17 describes the resulting conflict: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” The battle begins

because a new power and nature have entered. Before salvation, the flesh ruled without serious inward opposition. Conscience might accuse, consequences might frighten, and society might restrain, but no indwelling Holy Ghost opposed the flesh from within. After salvation, the Spirit and the new man agree with God against sin. The believer may stumble, fail, and sometimes yield disgracefully, but he cannot sin with the same uninterrupted peace he knew before. The presence of warfare does not prove the new creature is defective. It proves enemy forces remain in contested territory. A battlefield is noisy because two sides are present.

The Christian must therefore “walk in the Spirit” so that he will “not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). He must feed the new man through Scripture, yield his members to God, reckon himself dead to sin, put off the former conversation, and refuse to make provision for the flesh. These commands concern discipleship and practical sanctification, not the creation or preservation of his standing. Failure brings chastening, broken fellowship, lost joy, damaged testimony, reduced usefulness, and possible loss at the judgment seat of Christ. It does not reverse the Spirit’s creative act. God does not call the believer a temporary creature until the flesh behaves. The new man did not arise through good works, and bad works cannot crawl backward into God’s operation and prevent it from having occurred. The remedy for carnality is confession, correction, yielding, and renewed obedience—not another spiritual birth.

7. Created Unto Good Works, Not Created by Them

Ephesians 2:8–10 places works in their proper order. “For by grace are ye saved through faith,” followed by “Not of works, lest any man should boast,” and then, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Works are excluded as the cause and included as the purpose. The sinner is not created by good works; the saved man is created unto them. Religion reverses the order because Adam prefers earning a wage to receiving mercy. If works help produce salvation, the worker can compare himself with others, advertise his accomplishments, and preserve a corner of heaven for boasting. Grace closes the trophy case. The new creature is God’s workmanship, and every good work afterward rests upon life, opportunity, strength, and truth supplied by God. Even the crowns received at Christ’s judgment seat will be cast before the One who made the service possible.

Good works are evidence and fruit of life, but they must not be turned into the root. A living tree bears fruit according to health, maturity, nourishment, pruning, weather, and season. Some believers grow quickly; others remain stunted through ignorance, carnality, poor teaching, or disobedience. Scripture commands growth and warns against barrenness, but fruit does not create the tree. Tying apples to a dead branch may deceive a visitor until the

string shows. Religious imitation works the same way. A lost man can learn conservative standards, Christian phrases, church customs, and charitable behavior while remaining outside Christ. Human inspectors see fruit-shaped objects and pronounce him alive. God sees whether the root is in Christ. The question is not merely whether a man resembles Christians socially; it is whether the Spirit placed him into the living Christ through faith in the gospel.

The new creature also becomes Christ's representative in the world. Second Corinthians 5:18 says God "hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation," and verse 20 declares, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ." The man once alienated from God now carries the message by which other enemies may be reconciled. An ambassador does not invent policy, edit the king's message, or replace official terms with whatever the hostile country finds appealing. He speaks for the throne that sent him. The Church's message is that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," and that Christ was "made sin for us" so believers might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Social improvement, political influence, entertainment, community respectability, and institutional survival cannot replace that commission. God did not create a new creature so he could spend his life making the old world more comfortable on its way to judgment. He made him an ambassador carrying terms of peace from heaven.

Conclusion

Religion cannot create a new creature because religion operates upon the outside. It can wash skin, train habits, organize conduct, stimulate emotions, transfer membership, and confer titles. It can place Adam behind a pulpit, beneath water, inside a choir, upon a committee, or under a clerical robe. The arrangement may impress men, but heaven still sees Adam. Creation requires God. The sinner must be taken from his condemned standing in the first man and placed into the risen second Man. That transfer occurs when he hears the gospel—how Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again—and believes on Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost then performs what no priest, preacher, ordinance, denomination, or moral program can accomplish: He places the believer into Christ.

In Christ, the believer is no longer defined by Adam's condemnation. He is accepted in the beloved, justified by faith, reconciled to God, sealed by the Spirit, complete in Christ, blessed with all spiritual blessings, and made an heir of eternal life. His flesh remains capable of sin, his mind requires renewal, and his walk demands daily yielding, but those needs do not make God's creative work unreal. The old nature explains the conflict; the new creature explains why there is a conflict. Practical holiness does not preserve the birth, yet the birth provides the life from which holiness should grow. Grace does not

excuse the old man. It condemns him at the cross, creates a new man, and teaches the believer to stop handing the condemned criminal the keys.

Second Corinthians 5:17 remains a divine declaration, not a religious aspiration: “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” “Any man” opens the door to the vilest sinner; “in Christ” identifies the only position where life is found; “is” makes the possession present; and “a new creature” announces God’s finished act. The gospel does not invite Adam to audition for a Christian role. It calls the sinner to die to every confidence in the flesh and receive life in the risen Son of God. Church membership can change a roll, baptism can change dry clothes into wet ones, and religion can change a man’s public image. Only God can change his spiritual creation. Salvation is not Adam wearing Christ’s necktie. It is a new creature wearing Christ’s righteousness.

7 of 10 — The New Birth — Two Natures Fighting Under One Roof

Key Passage: Romans 7:15–25

Introduction

The new birth does not evict the flesh, convert the old nature, or transform Adam into a dependable tenant. It brings a new man into a house where the old occupant still knows every room, remembers every weakness, and keeps reaching for the keys. The believer receives life from God, but he continues living in a mortal body containing “the flesh,” in which Paul said “dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). That produces conflict. Before salvation, the old nature ruled without a genuine spiritual rival. Conscience might accuse, civil law might restrain, consequences might frighten, and religious training might polish the behavior, but no new man created in righteousness and true holiness lived within. After regeneration, the Holy Ghost indwells the believer, the inward man agrees with God, and the flesh discovers that its former undisputed kingdom has become contested territory. The Christian life is therefore not a peaceful merger between Adam and Christ. It is warfare beneath one roof.

Failure to distinguish these two natures has produced two opposite piles of doctrinal wreckage. One crowd teaches sinless perfection, claiming the old nature has been eradicated, sanctified into harmlessness, or converted so thoroughly that genuine believers no longer sin. Their doctrine generally survives until somebody examines their pride, temper, envy, private thoughts, or definition of sin. The other crowd sees the believer’s remaining struggle and concludes that any serious failure proves regeneration

never occurred. It turns assurance into a daily spiritual autopsy in which the Christian studies his flesh to determine whether Christ kept His promise. One error denies the reality of the flesh; the other denies the reality of the new man. The King James Bible denies neither. It says the old man is corrupt, the new man is created in holiness, the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. A doctrine that cannot account for both occupants will misdiagnose every battle in the house.

The conflict must also be understood without converting grace into permission for carnality. Eternal security does not make sin harmless, and the presence of two natures does not allow the believer to blame the old man while yielding him every room. The flesh can destroy fellowship, testimony, usefulness, health, joy, and reward. God chastens His children, judges careless conduct, and refuses to bless rebellion merely because the rebel knows the vocabulary of grace. Yet none of those consequences reverses regeneration. The believer's standing rests in Christ; his daily state depends upon whom he yields his members to obey. Salvation determines the ownership of the house, while sanctification concerns which occupant controls the furniture. The deed belongs to Christ, but a careless Christian can still let the old tenant wreck the place.

1. Before the New Birth, the Old Nature Ruled Alone

Romans 8:8 states, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." The natural man does not merely possess several fleshly habits that need adjustment; his entire standing is "in the flesh." He is born in Adam, spiritually dead, alienated from the life of God, and governed by a nature hostile to divine authority. The flesh may appear filthy or respectable, but both expressions come from the same source. One man's flesh sends him into drunkenness, immorality, violence, and open rebellion. Another man's flesh sends him into religion, self-righteousness, pride, reputation, and confidence in good works. The second man smells better at close range, but heaven does not confuse religious cologne with spiritual life. Cain brought worship, Saul of Tarsus brought zeal, and the Pharisee in Luke 18 brought a detailed moral résumé. None of them lacked religion. They lacked the righteousness and life found only in Christ.

The unregenerate man can experience moral conflict, but it is not the warfare between the indwelling Holy Ghost and a new man created by God. Romans 2:15 says Gentiles show "the work of the law written in their hearts," while their conscience bears witness and their thoughts accuse or excuse them. Conscience can condemn the thief before he steals, trouble the adulterer afterward, and warn the liar that exposure is coming. Social pressure, parental instruction, fear of punishment, natural affection, and personal discipline may strengthen that restraint. A lost man can hate consequences, regret decisions, abandon destructive habits, and choose outwardly better conduct. What he cannot do is produce

spiritual life. Conscience is a courtroom witness, not a resurrection power. It can testify that the corpse is guilty; it cannot raise him from the table.

The old nature is deceitful because it can exchange open wickedness for religious wickedness without surrendering the throne. A man may quit the tavern and become proud of his abstinence, leave gambling and begin wagering his soul upon good works, or stop cursing while using religious language to flatter himself. The flesh does not care whether it wears overalls, a business suit, or a clerical robe, provided it remains in charge. Colossians 2:23 warns of things that have “a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body,” yet are “not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.” Even self-denial can feed the flesh when pride receives the applause. Adam is perfectly willing to fast forty days if he may brag about it for forty years. Religious flesh would rather starve publicly than die privately.

2. The New Man Is Created After God

Ephesians 4:24 says, “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Every word matters. The new man is “created,” not cultivated from the better portion of Adam. He is created “after God,” not after human morality, religious tradition, or denominational respectability. He is created “in righteousness and true holiness,” not in probationary innocence waiting for the flesh to corrupt him. The old man is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; the new man is righteous and holy according to the character of the God who created him. These two natures do not gradually blend into one another like colors stirred in a bucket. Flesh remains flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit remains spirit. God did not save the sinner by marrying holiness to corruption and hoping the children favored the mother’s side.

First John 3:9 states, “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.” That verse cannot refer to the believer’s flesh becoming incapable of sin, because the same apostle wrote, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 John 1:8), and “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father” (1 John 2:1). The distinction is the new man born from God’s incorruptible seed. That new nature does not produce sin because it is created in righteousness and true holiness. The flesh sins because it came through Adam; the new man cannot sin because he is born of God. Deny the distinction, and John appears to contradict himself within two pages. Recognize the two natures, and the passages fit like a key in a well-oiled lock.

The new man is also called the “inward man.” Paul said in Romans 7:22, “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” Second Corinthians 4:16 says, “though our outward man

perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” The outward man ages, weakens, suffers, and approaches physical death, while the inward man is renewed through fellowship with God and truth from His word. Ephesians 3:16 speaks of being “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” The new man possesses desires the natural man did not have: hunger for Scripture, agreement with God against sin, longing for fellowship, delight in righteousness, and grief when the flesh gains control. Those desires may be neglected, weakened, or crowded by carnality, but their source is spiritual life. A dead man does not complain about being dead. The cry for holiness comes from something alive.

3. Romans 7 Describes a Civil War Inside the Believer

Romans 7:15 records Paul’s bewildering conflict: “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.” This is not the testimony of an unconcerned pagan enjoying sin without opposition. Paul hates what he sometimes does and desires what he sometimes fails to perform. He agrees that the law is good, delights in God’s law after the inward man, possesses a mind that serves the law of God, and finally thanks God through Jesus Christ. Those marks belong to a saved man confronting the inability of the flesh. Paul is not excusing sin or teaching that failure is unavoidable in every individual choice. He is demonstrating that sincere desire and knowledge of the law cannot produce victory when the believer attempts to conquer flesh with flesh. The law can identify the target; it cannot pull the trigger.

Paul says in Romans 7:17, “Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” He is not dodging responsibility by inventing another personality. He is distinguishing the new “I” that agrees with God from indwelling sin operating through the flesh. Verse 18 explains, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” The parenthesis prevents doctrinal disaster. Paul does not say no good thing dwells anywhere in him, for Christ and the Holy Ghost dwell in the believer. He locates the problem “in my flesh.” Sin is not merely an external suggestion shouting through the window; it has an inside agent occupying the mortal members. The Christian who trusts the flesh to defeat the flesh has appointed the burglar to guard the silverware.

Romans 7:21–23 describes three operations: “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me”; “I delight in the law of God after the inward man”; and “I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.” Desire for good exists, delight in God’s law exists, and an opposing power in the members also exists. This is war, not hypocrisy. Hypocrisy pretends to love righteousness while secretly preferring sin; spiritual conflict genuinely loves righteousness while encountering a hostile nature. That does not make every defeat acceptable, but it explains why effort divorced from the Spirit

ends in frustration. The inward man votes for God, the renewed mind agrees, and the flesh files an armed objection.

4. The Flesh and the Spirit Are Contrary Forces

Galatians 5:17 states the conflict plainly: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” Contrary does not mean slightly different in preference. It means opposed in nature, appetite, purpose, and direction. The flesh wants immediate gratification, self-exaltation, ease, revenge, applause, and independence from God. The Spirit leads toward truth, holiness, humility, obedience, love, and the exaltation of Jesus Christ. The flesh resents the Spirit because the Spirit will not flatter it, negotiate with it, or certify it as improved. The Spirit opposes the flesh because God has no peace treaty with corruption. The believer stands where these contrary forces meet, and every practical choice yields ground to one side.

Galatians 5 lists “the works of the flesh” and “the fruit of the Spirit.” Works are what the flesh produces through its own corrupt energy: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, hatred, variance, wrath, strife, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Fruit is what the Spirit produces as the believer walks under His control: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Notice that religion can imitate several outward features of the fruit while operating from the flesh. A salesman may display gentleness to close a contract, a politician may appear longsuffering until the election, and a religious hypocrite may perform goodness for public applause. The true fruit of the Spirit proceeds from spiritual life and glorifies Christ rather than the performer. Wax fruit photographs well, but bite into it and the teeth discover the difference.

The command is not to eradicate the flesh but to “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). God could have written, “Destroy the flesh completely and then walk in the Spirit,” if eradication were the plan. Instead, He acknowledges the continuing lust and supplies a practical victory. Walking speaks of repeated dependence and direction. A single spiritual decision yesterday does not walk for today. The believer must continue yielding to the Spirit, receiving the word, praying, refusing provision for lust, and obeying known truth. The flesh does not retire because the Christian won one battle. It studies the defeat, changes uniforms, and returns through another door. Yesterday’s victory is a testimony, not a lifetime exemption from watchfulness.

5. Standing in Christ Is Not the Same as Daily State

The believer’s standing is his unchanging position before God in Jesus Christ. He is justified, reconciled, accepted in the beloved, complete in Christ, sealed by the Holy Ghost, and made a member of Christ’s body. Romans 8:1 says, “There is therefore now no

condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” The chapter later asks, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” The standing rests upon God’s verdict and Christ’s finished work, not upon the daily condition of the flesh. If standing rose and fell with performance, no believer would remain justified through breakfast. One proud thought would reverse Romans 5, one angry word would break the Spirit’s seal, and eternal life would function like a motel reservation canceled at checkout.

The believer’s state concerns his present walk, fellowship, obedience, fruitfulness, and usefulness. That state changes. A Christian may walk in the Spirit or fulfil the lust of the flesh. He may speak truth or lie, forgive or become bitter, pray or neglect prayer, study Scripture or feed continually upon the world. Ephesians 4:30 warns, “grieve not the holy Spirit of God,” while 1 Thessalonians 5:19 says, “Quench not the Spirit.” An unsaved man cannot grieve an indwelling Spirit he does not possess. These warnings are addressed to people sealed unto the day of redemption. Carnality does not prove the Spirit departed; it proves the believer is resisting the One who remains. The smoke alarm sounds because the house still has power.

Sin in the believer’s life therefore affects fellowship without undoing relationship. First John 1:9 promises, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Confession is not a second conversion or another birth. The believer agrees with God about the sin and receives restored fellowship on the ground of Christ’s advocacy. First John 2:1 says, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Notice the relationship remains “with the Father.” The sinning believer is a disobedient child, not an unborn child. A dirty son needs washing, correction, and restored fellowship; he does not need to reenter his mother’s womb and start the family relationship again.

6. Two Natures Destroy Two Opposite Errors

Sinless perfection collapses beneath the plain testimony of Scripture and honest self-examination. Paul did not claim his flesh contained no sin; he said no good thing dwelled in it. John did not say believers no longer possess sin; he warned that claiming such a condition is self-deception. James wrote, “For in many things we offend all” (James 3:2). The flesh remains so dangerous that Paul kept his body under subjection lest, after preaching to others, he should become a castaway in service. Perfectionists usually survive by shrinking the definition of sin until it excludes everything they still do. Pride becomes confidence, gossip becomes concern, temper becomes righteous indignation, envy becomes discernment, and dishonesty becomes an unfortunate misunderstanding. When theology requires a private dictionary to protect the preacher’s reputation, the flesh is already running the publishing department.

The opposite error claims that any substantial struggle or failure proves the believer was never saved. That teaching directs assurance toward the flesh and commands the Christian to search for enough improved behavior to verify Christ's faithfulness. But the flesh has never supplied biblical assurance. It can imitate goodness when profitable and erupt into wickedness when indulged. Assurance rests upon God's written record concerning His Son: "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12). The existence of conflict may demonstrate that the inward man opposes sin, but assurance does not rest upon measuring the volume of the battle. A believer may be immature, poorly taught, frightened, wounded by false doctrine, or trapped in habits he must learn to overcome. Christ remains the object of faith. The safest place to examine salvation is not Adam's behavior under changing conditions but God's promise attached to His unchanging Son.

Eternal security, however, is not permission to surrender to the old nature. Paul asked, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" and answered, "God forbid" (Romans 6:1-2). Grace does not encourage the believer to serve the nature Christ condemned. Sin brings consequences even when it cannot reverse sonship. Hebrews 12 teaches chastening for God's children. First Corinthians 11 shows that careless believers may become weak, sickly, and even die physically under judgment. First Corinthians 3 warns that worthless works will burn at the judgment seat, though the believer himself "shall be saved; yet so as by fire." The Christian may reach heaven without losing salvation and still arrive carrying the smell of smoke from a wasted life. That is not victory; it is eternal rescue accompanied by tremendous loss.

7. Victory Comes by Reckoning, Yielding, and Walking

Romans 6:11 commands, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Reckoning means counting God's statement true and conducting oneself accordingly. The believer does not feel the flesh dead, for its lusts regularly announce otherwise. He reckons himself identified with Christ's death and refuses sin's claim to ownership. The old nature argues, threatens, flatters, and demands, but it possesses no rightful authority over the man in Christ. Romans 6:14 says, "For sin shall not have dominion over you." That is not a promise that sin cannot tempt or that the believer cannot foolishly yield. It is a declaration that sin's mastery has been broken. The prison door stands open; the Christian does not need to keep sleeping in the cell because the mattress feels familiar.

The believer must also yield his members to God. Romans 6:13 says, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God." The eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, mind, time, money, and bodily appetites become instruments in the conflict. An instrument produces according to the hand controlling it. A

knife in a surgeon's hand may save life; the same blade in a murderer's hand destroys it. The Christian cannot feed the flesh continuously through corrupt entertainment, ungodly companionship, private fantasy, bitterness, pride, and neglect of Scripture and then wonder why the old nature appears unusually strong. He has supplied ammunition to one army while leaving the other unfed. You cannot cater three meals a day to the flesh and expect the new man to win the evening wrestling match on one verse remembered from Sunday.

Walking in the Spirit requires the steady use of what God has supplied: the King James Bible, prayer, confession, obedience, sound fellowship, preaching, watchfulness, and dependence upon the Holy Ghost. None of these disciplines creates or preserves sonship; they strengthen practical fellowship and train the believer to put on the new man. Romans 12:2 commands renewal of the mind, Ephesians 6 commands the whole armour of God, and Colossians 3 commands the word of Christ to dwell richly within. Victory is not produced by staring at the flesh and promising it will behave. Peter learned that lesson after boasting he would die with Christ and then denying Him before servants. Confidence in the flesh is the bugle played before retreat. Dependence upon Christ is the beginning of strength.

Conclusion

The believer contains a conflict because regeneration introduced life into territory formerly ruled by death. The flesh remains corrupt, hostile, deceitful, and incapable of pleasing God. The new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness. The inward man delights in God's law, while sin in the members wars against the renewed mind. These facts are not contradictions; they are the biblical anatomy of Christian experience. The old nature has not been converted, and the new man has not been corrupted. They remain contrary until physical death or the Rapture removes the believer from the mortal body and Christ changes it like unto His glorious body. Until then, the house contains two occupants, but only one holds the deed.

Do not let the conflict drive you into sinless-perfection pride or salvation-doubting despair. If you claim the flesh no longer sins, it has already deceived you. If you look to the flesh for assurance, it will accuse you before breakfast and flatter you by lunch. Look to Jesus Christ for your standing and to the Holy Ghost for power in your walk. Confess failure without pretending it erased the birth. Receive chastening without mistaking the Father for a judge condemning a stranger. Refuse carnality without imagining your refusal purchases eternal life. Salvation is by grace; discipleship demands obedience. Relationship is permanent; fellowship must be maintained. Standing rests in Christ; state reflects daily yielding.

The old nature will never become housebroken. It may sit quietly for a season, wear a religious collar, and appear almost civilized, but leave the door open and it will drag mud across every room. The answer is not to deny that it lives there, nor to surrender the house because it growled. Reckon it dead, refuse its claims, yield your members to God, feed the inward man, and walk in the Spirit. Before salvation, the flesh ruled alone. After the new birth, another occupant moved in—and that occupant agrees with God, loves His word, and will outlive the house.

8 of 10 — The New Birth — Born Into a Family Religion Cannot Join

Key Passage: John 1:10–13

Introduction

One of the most popular religious lies in circulation is the claim that every human being is already a child of God. The statement sounds broad, tender, tolerant, and harmless enough to fit on a greeting card, which is usually where bad theology goes after it leaves the pulpit. The King James Bible does not teach the universal fatherhood of God. It teaches the universal creatorship of God and the universal accountability of man, but spiritual sonship belongs to those who receive Jesus Christ. John 1:12 says, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” If everyone already possessed that sonship by natural birth, nobody would need power “to become” anything. A man cannot become what he has always been. Scripture draws a line religion keeps erasing: all men are creatures of God, but only those born of God are children of God. The first birth places a man in Adam’s family; the second places him in God’s family. Heaven does not adopt Adam’s entire nursery merely because religious sentiment dislikes distinctions.

John 1 sets this truth against the rejection of Jesus Christ. “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.” The Creator walked through His creation unrecognized. Then “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” Israel possessed the covenants, promises, Scriptures, temple, priesthood, and Messianic prophecies, yet the nation did not receive its King. The passage then turns from national privilege to personal reception: “But as many as received him.” Those words open the door beyond ancestry, institution, social rank, and religious pedigree. The poor may receive Him, the wealthy may receive Him, the Jew may receive Him, the Gentile may receive Him, the moral may receive Him, and the ruined may receive Him. The entrance requirement is not superior blood but faith in His blood. Christ’s own nation rejected Him, but no individual who receives Him is rejected by God.

The new birth creates a real family relationship, not an honorary membership sustained by religious paperwork. A church may receive a member after a vote, issue a certificate, place his photograph in a directory, and later remove his name when he moves, sins, disagrees, or dies. God's family does not operate like a denominational mailing list. The believer is begotten by God's incorruptible word, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, given the Spirit of adoption, and made an heir with Christ. Regeneration gives life; adoption gives the standing and inheritance of a son; the Holy Ghost witnesses to that relationship. These works come together in salvation while answering different needs. Religion can create members, followers, subscribers, and institutional dependents. It cannot beget one child of God. A church can write a name in the minutes; only God can write a relationship into eternity.

1. The Creator Is Not Automatically the Father

God created every human being, gives breath and life, governs history, and holds all men accountable. Acts 17:28 says, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being," and Paul acknowledged that mankind is "the offspring of God" in the sense of creaturely origin. But creation and regeneration are not identical relationships. Adam is called "the son of God" in Luke 3:38 because God directly created him, yet Adam's fallen descendants require a new birth to enter spiritual sonship. A carpenter may build a table without becoming the table's father. Creation establishes ownership and accountability; birth establishes family life. The world prefers to call God Father while refusing His Son because "Father" sounds comforting when detached from holiness, judgment, and the cross. Scripture refuses the arrangement. First John 2:23 says, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father."

Jesus destroyed universal-sonship theology in His confrontation with unbelieving religious leaders. They claimed, "We have one Father, even God," but Christ answered, "If God were your Father, ye would love me" (John 8:41–42). Then He said plainly, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). These were not atheists denying God's existence. They were religious men claiming Abrahamic descent, defending tradition, quoting Scripture, and asserting divine fatherhood. Christ did not affirm their sincere spiritual identity and suggest a dialogue. He identified their father by their rejection of the Son. Men who hate that language should take the complaint to the Speaker. Jesus Christ did not attend the modern school of religious diplomacy, where every serpent receives a participation trophy and every wolf is affirmed as a misunderstood sheep.

Ephesians 2:3 says fallen men are "by nature the children of wrath." That is the natural condition, not "children of God who have temporarily forgotten their value." Man begins in Adam, under sin, death, and condemnation. Ephesians 2:12 describes Gentiles apart from

Christ as “without hope, and without God in the world.” They are not secret sons waiting for improved self-awareness. They need reconciliation, redemption, regeneration, and adoption. The kindness of God does not lie about their condition; it provides the only remedy. Divine love sent the Son so condemned creatures could become sons. If all men were already in the family, Calvary would be a bloody solution to a nonexistent problem. The cross stands because spiritual sonship had to be purchased at infinite cost.

2. “Not of Blood” Closes the Family Entrance

John 1:13 says the sons of God are born “not of blood.” Natural ancestry cannot produce spiritual life. A man may inherit his father’s eyes, his mother’s temperament, his grandfather’s name, the family property, and several generations of religious tradition, but he cannot inherit the new birth. Salvation does not travel through chromosomes. Godly parents may pray, teach Scripture, provide discipline, model faithfulness, and place the gospel before their children repeatedly. Those privileges are enormous, but privilege is not regeneration. Every child must personally receive Jesus Christ. God has no grandchildren because the life of God does not pass through human genealogy. A child may be raised in the church nursery, educated in Sunday school, baptized at the customary age, and still remain in Adam until he believes the gospel.

Jewish ancestry could not produce sonship apart from faith in Christ. John the Baptist warned religious leaders, “think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father” (Matthew 3:9). Jesus told men boasting of Abraham, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham” (John 8:39). Romans 9:6 says, “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel,” distinguishing mere natural descent from believing participation in the promise. Yet this truth does not authorize replacement theology to steal Israel’s national covenants and hand them to the Church. Israel remains Israel, the Church remains the body of Christ, and Romans 9–11 preserves God’s prophetic dealings with the nation. Personal salvation never came merely through Jewish blood, and Church Age sonship does not turn a Gentile believer into a replacement Jew. The Bible can distinguish spiritual life from ancestry without allowing a Gentile theologian to burglarize Abraham’s house.

Christian family ancestry fares no better. A man may descend from preachers, missionaries, martyrs, reformers, or faithful Bible believers and remain unsaved. His grandfather’s testimony cannot be endorsed like a check and deposited into the grandson’s account. Timothy knew the holy Scriptures from childhood, but those Scriptures were able to make him “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). The family supplied Scripture; faith had to rest in Christ. Religious heritage is a lamp pointing toward the door, not the door itself. Many people carry the lamp proudly while

refusing to enter. They know when their parents were saved, where their grandparents attended church, which hymns the family loves, and what denomination appears in the obituary, but cannot identify the gospel upon which their own soul rests. Heaven does not conduct genealogy interviews at the gate.

3. Neither Human Will Nor Religious Authority Can Beget a Son

John 1:13 continues, “nor of the will of the flesh.” The flesh cannot decide to improve itself into divine sonship. It may make resolutions, abandon destructive habits, adopt standards, perform charity, and submit to religious discipline. None of those acts creates life from God. A sinner ought to leave wickedness because wickedness destroys, condemns, and hardens, but quitting several sins does not beget the quitter. The flesh may become moral while remaining flesh. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). The dog may decide to stop chasing cars, but the decision does not produce wool. Human determination can change habits; it cannot change spiritual ancestry.

The verse also says, “nor of the will of man.” No priest, preacher, parent, denomination, council, congregation, or ecclesiastical officer can decree someone into God’s family. Men may pronounce, certify, register, baptize, confirm, ordain, and congratulate, but God alone begets. Infant baptism provides the most obvious example of religious will attempting to substitute for personal faith. A baby who cannot hear the gospel, understand the message, or believe on Christ is carried to an official, touched with water, and declared part of a spiritual family by someone else’s decision. The infant supplies no faith, the New Testament supplies no command, and the ceremony supplies no life. Tradition furnishes the baby, basin, formula, godparents, certificate, and theology, while Scripture is invited afterward to stand politely in the photograph.

Church membership is another act of human will that cannot produce sonship. A congregation may examine a testimony and receive a person on the basis of his profession, but no committee sees the heart. Judas held apostolic office and remained the son of perdition. Simon the sorcerer was baptized, continued with Philip, and remained in the bond of iniquity. A church roll can contain both saved and lost names because men record professions; God knows possession. Local church membership is important for fellowship, doctrine, service, accountability, and obedience, but it follows salvation. Joining God’s family by joining a church is like attempting to become part of a household by adding your name to its grocery list. The paper may enter the kitchen while you remain outside.

4. Receiving Christ and Believing on His Name

John 1:12 describes the same saving response in two related ways: “as many as received him” and “even to them that believe on his name.” Receiving Christ is believing on Him, not

consuming Him through a sacrament, accepting Him as a moral example, or inviting Him to become an adviser in an otherwise self-governed life. Faith receives the Person God has revealed. The sinner agrees with God's testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, the only Saviour, and the One whose death and resurrection provide eternal life. John 20:31 says the Gospel was written "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Life comes through believing, not through admiring Christianity from the audience.

Believing on His name includes trusting what He accomplished for sinners. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares the gospel: "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Faith does not rest in a vague Jesus constructed from sentiment, culture, artwork, or private imagination. It rests in the biblical Christ and His finished work. The Mormon Jesus, Jehovah's Witness Jesus, Islamic Jesus, sacramental Jesus, and liberal teacher-Jesus cannot save because none is the Christ revealed in Scripture. A counterfeit key may be beautifully polished and sincerely used, but the lock remains closed. The name of Jesus is not a religious password added to a false gospel. It identifies the crucified and risen Son of God.

Faith receives; it does not purchase. Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." A gift may be costly to the giver while free to the receiver. Salvation cost Christ His blood, but the sinner does not share the payment. Faith is the empty hand accepting what grace provides. Religion keeps trying to hide coins in the palm—baptism, sacraments, surrender, church membership, law-keeping, lifelong perseverance—and then claims the transaction remains free. A gift requiring payment at the counter and monthly installments afterward is not a gift; it is financing. Eternal life is given to the one who believes on the Son because Christ paid the full price before the sinner arrived.

5. Given Power to Become the Sons of God

"To them gave he power to become the sons of God." The word "power" here speaks of God-given authority and right, not human ability to regenerate oneself. The believer does not seize sonship by force, announce himself adopted, or climb into the family tree with religious ambition. Christ gives him the right to become a son because Christ's blood has answered the condemnation that kept him outside. The verse also says "become," once again destroying the claim that every man begins as God's child. The sinner begins as a creature in Adam and becomes a son through faith in Christ. Sonship is granted, not discovered. A rebel does not need improved awareness of his royal ancestry; he needs pardon and adoption from the King he opposed.

Regeneration and adoption are closely joined but doctrinally distinct. Regeneration concerns life: the dead sinner is quickened and born of God. Adoption concerns standing, privilege, and inheritance: the believer receives the full position of a son. Romans 8:15 says, “ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Galatians 4:5 says Christ came “To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” God does not adopt the sinner while leaving him spiritually dead, nor regenerate him while leaving him outside the household. He gives life and standing together. The believer is born into the family and placed as an heir within it. Grace does not bring a child through the door and assign him permanent quarters in the servants’ shed.

The biblical title “sons of God” carries the dignity of standing and inheritance. Galatians 3:26 says, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” and verse 28 says there is neither male nor female in spiritual standing, “for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” That does not abolish biological sex, marriage order, or the distinctions God established in creation. A saved woman does not become a biological male, and a saved man does not become female because both are one in Christ. The language of sonship places every believer, male or female, in the full position of an heir. God’s vocabulary managed equality without pretending creation had forgotten the difference between a father and a mother.

6. Relationship Remains When Fellowship Is Broken

Birth establishes a relationship that conduct may dishonor but cannot reverse. A child may disobey his father, reject instruction, disgrace the family name, and suffer severe consequences, but no act travels backward through time and prevents his birth. The believer’s spiritual birth rests upon even stronger ground because he is born of “incorruptible” seed “by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). Human birth begins with corruptible seed and still establishes a permanent earthly relationship. Divine birth begins with incorruptible seed, yet religion teaches that the relationship may disappear whenever the child misbehaves badly enough. That theology gives Adam’s seed more permanence than God’s.

Hebrews 12 teaches that God chastens His children: “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Chastening does not prove the relationship ended; it proves the relationship exists. Verse 8 says that if men are without chastisement, “then are ye bastards, and not sons.” God does not discipline the believer in order to decide whether to keep him. He disciplines him because he belongs to the family. The Father may use conviction, consequences, loss, weakness, sickness, church discipline, and even physical death in severe cases, as 1 Corinthians 11 demonstrates. Grace is not neglectful parenting. The God who secures His children also corrects them, and the hand that will not release them is fully capable of applying the rod.

When a believer sins, fellowship requires restoration, not relationship requiring recreation. First John 2:1 says, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” John does not say we had a Father until the sin occurred and now require another conversion. Christ advocates “with the Father.” First John 1:9 instructs believers to confess sins for forgiveness and cleansing. Confession is the child agreeing with his Father about what damaged fellowship. It is not the sinner purchasing another birth. Religion repeatedly sends God’s children back to the maternity ward because it cannot distinguish a dirty son from a dead stranger. The Bible sends the dirty son to the Advocate and the Father’s cleansing.

7. The Family Comes With a Household and an Inheritance

Ephesians 2:19 tells saved Gentiles, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” The believer receives more than an individual escape from hell. He enters a household composed of all who belong to God through Christ. In the present Church Age, believing Jews and Gentiles are joined in one body without erasing God’s distinct national promises to Israel. The middle wall dividing Jew and Gentile in the body has been broken down, and both have access “by one Spirit unto the Father.” The Church is not a Gentile replacement for Israel; it is the new body revealed through Paul in which saved Jews and Gentiles share equal spiritual standing. Right division protects both truths from the denominational blender.

Family membership also brings inheritance. Romans 8:16–17 says, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” The believer’s inheritance includes eternal life, resurrection glory, a heavenly position, and participation in Christ’s coming kingdom according to God’s promises. He possesses the earnest of that inheritance now through the indwelling Holy Ghost and awaits the redemption of the body. Rewards for faithful service vary and may be gained or lost at the judgment seat of Christ, but inheritance attached to sonship rests upon the relationship. A careless son may squander opportunities and lose reward without becoming a stranger to his father’s bloodline. Salvation and reward must not be stuffed into the same envelope.

The believer should also display the resemblance of his heavenly Father. Ephesians 5:1 says, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.” Family likeness is the result of sonship, not the means of obtaining it. Children learn speech, manner, priorities, and conduct from the household in which they grow. The Christian should reflect the Father’s holiness, truth, mercy, love, and righteousness because he possesses life from God and the Spirit within. Yet imitation without birth remains counterfeit. A stranger can copy the father’s walk, wear similar clothing, and learn the family expressions without becoming an

heir. Works may display family likeness; they cannot create family life. Heaven's household is entered through the Son, not through a costume contest.

Conclusion

No man enters God's family through natural blood, fleshly resolution, religious authority, infant ceremony, denominational membership, or inherited tradition. John closes every counterfeit entrance: "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The religious man may carry certificates, family history, baptismal records, confirmation papers, and church letters, but none constitutes a heavenly birth certificate. Nicodemus possessed Abrahamic ancestry, scriptural education, religious authority, and public respectability, yet Christ told him, "Ye must be born again." If Israel's master required another birth, sitting in Grandma's pew will not exempt anyone.

The sinner becomes a son by receiving Jesus Christ and believing on His name. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. He paid the debt, satisfied judgment, defeated death, and offers eternal life freely. The sinner who believes is quickened, born of incorruptible seed, placed into Christ, sealed by the Holy Ghost, and given the Spirit of adoption. He receives a Father, a household, brethren, access, discipline, advocacy, and inheritance. Religion may offer affiliation with an organization. Christ brings the believer home.

The family relationship rests upon the Father's act, the Son's blood, the Spirit's seal, and the living word—not upon the child's ability to maintain religious paperwork. Fellowship may suffer, testimony may collapse, chastening may become severe, and reward may be lost, but birth remains birth. A church can erase a name from its roll, a denomination can revoke a certificate, and men can deny fellowship. None can reach into heaven and make God unborn His child. Religion can admit members; only God can beget sons.

9 of 10 — The New Birth — God's Birth Certificate for the Believer

Key Passage: 1 John 5:9–13

Introduction

A birth certificate is an official record issued by an authority, not an emotion preserved by the person whose birth it records. A man may forget the hour he was born, misunderstand the circumstances surrounding his delivery, or possess no personal memory of the event at all, but none of that cancels his birth. He does not prove he exists by recovering an infant

sensation from the delivery room. He rests upon objective facts and a record supplied by those with authority to testify. God treats assurance the same way. He does not command His children to rummage through fading memories, measure the intensity of old tears, or reconstruct the emotional atmosphere of a church service held thirty years ago. He gives them His written record concerning His Son. First John 5:11 says, “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” The record rests outside the believer’s nervous system. Feelings may read it, enjoy it, doubt it, or tremble over it, but feelings cannot alter one letter.

Modern religion has made assurance unnecessarily mysterious because frightened people are easier to control. One system keeps salvation locked behind sacraments, another behind lifelong perseverance, another behind emotional experiences, and another behind endless examination of fruit. The believer is told to look backward at his conversion, inward at his feelings, outward at his performance, and forward at whether he will endure—but rarely upward at Jesus Christ. The result is a soul pacing inside a theological waiting room while the finished work of Calvary sits untouched on the table. First John was written to end that confusion: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” God did not say hope, suspect, imagine, or wait until death to discover. He said “know.” Biblical assurance is not arrogance. It is humility taking God at His word.

Security and assurance must be distinguished. Security is the objective fact that God keeps the believer; assurance is the believer’s subjective confidence in that fact. A saved man may experience doubt without becoming unsaved, just as a passenger may fear the bridge while the bridge continues holding him. His trembling does not weaken the steel. Likewise, confidence does not save a lost man if it rests upon the wrong object. A passenger may feel perfectly secure while dancing on rotten boards. The issue is not the strength of the feeling but the strength of the foundation. The believer’s foundation is Christ’s finished work, God’s written promise, the Holy Ghost’s seal, and eternal life already possessed in the Son. Assurance grows when the soul stops grading its own confidence and begins believing the One who cannot lie.

1. God’s Record Outranks the Witness of Man

First John 5:9 begins, “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.” Human society operates constantly upon testimony. Courts receive witnesses, banks accept signatures, governments issue documents, doctors certify births, and employers trust records prepared by other men. Nobody personally verifies every fact upon which daily life depends. Yet when God testifies concerning His Son, the sinner suddenly demands private confirmation, unusual feelings, visible signs, and a committee of religious

experts. John reduces the issue to authority: God's witness is greater. He was present at Calvary, raised His Son from the dead, inspired the written record, and cannot lie. If men accept lesser testimony to settle earthly matters, refusing God's testimony concerning eternal life is not caution. It is unbelief dressed in spectacles.

Verse 10 sharpens the matter: "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." Unbelief often presents itself as humility. The doubter says, "I do not want to presume," while God says eternal life belongs to the believer. Refusing to accept that promise does not make the soul humble; it makes God a liar. Humility does not correct the Almighty. A man who believes God is not boasting that he deserves salvation. He is confessing that Christ deserves to be trusted. The proud man insists his sin is too great for Christ's blood, his failure too powerful for God's grace, or his feelings too important for Scripture's verdict. That may sound self-condemning, but the self remains enthroned. Christ's blood is being measured by Adam's emotions.

God's record states three facts in succession: "God hath given to us eternal life," "this life is in his Son," and "He that hath the Son hath life." The gift comes from God, the life resides in Christ, and possession depends upon having the Son. The record does not say life is in church membership, baptism, perseverance, emotional intensity, or moral achievement. It is in the Son. Assurance therefore begins with a direct question: Do you have Jesus Christ through faith in the gospel? If so, God says you have life. The believer does not need to move eternal life from Christ into his performance for safekeeping. It is safer where God placed it. Religion keeps searching the believer's pockets for life; Scripture points to the risen Son seated in heaven.

2. Christ's Finished Work Is the Foundation

The gospel upon which assurance rests is an objective message about completed events. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Christ died for sins, not merely as a martyr to sincerity or an example of sacrificial love. He bore the judgment guilt deserved. He was buried because His death was real, and He rose because death could not hold the sinless Son of God. These events occurred before the sinner believed, felt, prayed, promised, reformed, or joined anything. The foundation was laid outside human experience. Faith does not make Calvary true; Calvary makes faith worthwhile.

Christ cried from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He did not say, "I have started a payment plan that sinners must complete through improved conduct." Hebrews 10:12 says, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the

right hand of God.” The Old Testament priest stood because his work continued; Christ sat because His sacrifice was complete. Romans 4:25 says He “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” The empty tomb is heaven’s receipt declaring the payment accepted. Assurance does not rest upon the believer finishing what Christ forgot. The Saviour did not leave one sin unpaid so religion could sell the final installment.

Faith must therefore remain fixed upon Christ rather than upon the act of believing. Some believers begin with Christ and later shift their attention to whether their faith was strong enough, informed enough, emotional enough, or correctly worded enough. Faith then becomes the new object of faith. The soul stares at its own hand instead of the gift held in it. Romans 4:5 says faith is counted for righteousness to the one who “believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.” The object is “him,” not the believer’s ability to admire his own believing. Weak faith resting upon an almighty Christ is safer than enormous confidence resting upon a ceremony. A trembling hand can receive a solid gift.

3. Eternal Life Is a Present Possession

Jesus said in John 6:47, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” “Hath” is present possession. Christ did not say the believer may receive life after death if his final record proves satisfactory. John 5:24 is even more detailed: “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.” The verse contains a present possession, a future promise, and a completed transfer. He “hath” life, “shall not” come into condemnation, and “is passed” from death unto life. Religion changes all three verbs until the believer possesses temporary life, may return to condemnation, and is slowly passing from death if performance continues. Christ’s grammar survives the vandalism.

Everlasting life must last forever or the adjective becomes meaningless. Life that ends when the believer fails is conditional life. Life that lasts until the next serious sin is temporary life. Life that survives only while the recipient maintains it is probationary life. God calls the gift everlasting because its duration rests upon Christ. First John 5:11 says, “this life is in his Son.” Jesus said, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19). The believer’s life is not stored in the flesh, where sin and weakness could corrupt it. Colossians 3:3 says, “your life is hid with Christ in God.” To destroy that life, the accuser would need to break into heaven, overthrow the Father, remove the Son, and undo the resurrection. Satan has difficulty enough keeping his own kingdom from cracking before breakfast.

Present possession also means the believer does not need to wait for death to discover whether salvation worked. First John 3:2 says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.”

Sonship is now. Justification is now. Peace with God is now. The Spirit's indwelling is now. The body's redemption awaits the Rapture, and the inheritance awaits its full manifestation, but eternal life has already begun. Physical death may interrupt earthly service, yet it cannot interrupt a life seated with Christ in heavenly places. The grave can temporarily receive the Christian's body, but it cannot file a claim against his birth certificate.

4. The Holy Ghost Witnesses and Seals

Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The Holy Ghost does not merely perform regeneration and leave the believer without testimony. He indwells the saved man and bears witness to sonship. This witness includes a new capacity to cry, "Abba, Father," a new agreement with God's truth, a new awareness of sin, and a new relationship with Scripture and prayer. The natural man may imitate religious behavior, but he does not possess the indwelling Spirit of adoption. The believer knows God not merely as Creator and Judge but as Father through Jesus Christ. That relationship is spiritual reality, not religious imagination.

Ephesians 1:13 provides the objective order: "after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." The sinner hears the gospel, believes in Christ, and is sealed. The seal identifies ownership, security, authority, and destination. Ephesians 4:30 says the believer is "sealed unto the day of redemption." God did not seal him until the next temptation, doctrinal doubt, or emotional valley. The destination appears upon the seal. Second Corinthians 1:22 says God "hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." The earnest is the divine guarantee that the purchased possession will be fully redeemed.

The Spirit's inward witness must not be confused with every private feeling, impression, dream, chill, impulse, or unexplained voice. The Holy Ghost inspired the written word and does not bear witness against His own testimony. He does not tell one man he is saved by grace and another that baptism, sacraments, or law-keeping completed the transaction. He does not contradict the gospel and then demand recognition because the contradiction felt powerful. The Spirit bears witness with the word, glorifies Christ, and directs faith toward God's promises. Feelings may accompany His witness, but they are not the measuring instrument. A train whistle may announce that the locomotive is coming, but the whistle does not pull the cars.

5. First John Supplies Certainties, Not a Torture Chamber

First John repeatedly connects the new birth with faith in Jesus Christ. First John 5:1 says, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” The foundation is faith in the biblical Christ. John does not say whosoever remembers the date, produces flawless behavior, or maintains constant emotional confidence is born of God. Faith rests upon the Son revealed by Scripture. The epistle also identifies false claimants who deny the Father and the Son, reject that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, or refuse the apostolic record. Assurance cannot be built upon a false Jesus. Sincerity toward a counterfeit Christ merely fastens the soul more sincerely to the wrong foundation.

The epistle also describes righteousness and love as expressions of the new nature. First John 2:29 says, “every one that doeth righteousness is born of him,” while 1 John 4:7 says, “every one that loveth is born of God.” These statements describe family likeness, not a works contract by which sonship is purchased. The child resembles the Father because life has been received; resemblance does not create the relationship. Practical fruit may vary in visibility, maturity, consistency, and abundance because believers may be carnal, poorly taught, disobedient, or immature. The fruit should exist and increase, but it must never replace Christ as the ground of assurance. Inspecting fruit may expose practical problems; it cannot improve the Root.

First John’s statements about not sinning refer to the new man born from God’s seed, not the eradication of the flesh. First John 3:9 says, “his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” The same apostle already said that claiming to have no sin is self-deception and that believers who sin have an Advocate. The inward man created in righteousness does not produce sin; the flesh remains corrupt. This distinction allows the believer to take sin seriously without concluding that every failure killed God’s seed. The conflict between the two natures is not proof that no life exists. A cemetery has no civil war because all its occupants are dead.

6. Assurance Does Not Depend Upon Memory, Emotion, or Perfection

A believer may forget the exact date of salvation without losing the life received. Some conversions occur at a clearly remembered hour; others follow a period in which gospel truth becomes understood and faith rests in Christ without a dramatic calendar marker. The Bible commands faith in Christ, not faith in a date. Likewise, the wording of a prayer does not save. A sinner’s prayer may express genuine faith, but syllables are not sacramental coins dropped into heaven’s machine. Romans 10 joins confession with heart belief. Tears may accompany conviction, but salt water cannot wash away sin. Christ’s blood does that. Religious systems often preserve the scenery of conversion while losing sight of the Saviour who makes conversion real.

Assurance cannot rest upon a flawless record after salvation because no believer produces one. Paul admitted continuing conflict with the flesh, John acknowledged the possibility of Christian sin, and James said, “For in many things we offend all.” If perfection were the evidence required, every honest Christian would lose assurance and every hypocrite skilled at hiding sin would gain it. Continuous introspection eventually makes the flesh the judge, witness, defendant, and jury. The believer examines his motives until every good work appears contaminated, examines his faith until every doubt appears fatal, and examines his fruit until every weakness becomes evidence of death. The remedy is not careless living; it is correctly placing assurance in Christ while dealing honestly with practical sin.

Post-salvation failure affects fellowship, joy, testimony, usefulness, chastening, and reward, but it does not undo the new birth. First John 2:1 says, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The relationship remains with the Father. First John 1:9 supplies confession and cleansing, not repeated regeneration. Hebrews 12 supplies chastening for sons, not condemnation for strangers. A disobedient child may feel distant from his father because rebellion has damaged fellowship, yet feeling distant does not erase the family record. Sin darkens the window; it does not move the house out of the family.

7. The Accuser Attacks What God Has Settled

Revelation 12:10 calls Satan “the accuser of our brethren.” Accusation is one of his oldest weapons because he understands how easily believers confuse conviction with condemnation. The Holy Ghost convicts specifically, points to the sin, agrees with Scripture, and leads toward confession and restoration. Satan accuses broadly, rehearses forgiven guilt, attacks identity, and insists that Christ’s blood failed. His favourite sermon has one point: “After what you did, you cannot belong to God.” The answer is not to defend the flesh. The flesh is indefensible. The answer is that Christ died for the guilty, God justified the believing ungodly, and “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again” (Romans 8:34).

False teachers reinforce the accuser by lifting warning passages from their doctrinal settings and aiming them at the Church Age believer’s sonship. “Endure unto the end” in Matthew 24 is dragged from Tribulation context and used to rewrite Paul’s gospel. Hebrews 6 and 10 are wielded without regard to audience, covenant setting, or the impossible consequences of the interpretations being imposed. John 15’s burned branches are treated as regenerated sons losing eternal life rather than fruitless discipleship and judgment upon useless testimony. Paul’s fear of becoming a castaway in 1 Corinthians 9 is converted from disqualification in service into damnation of the soul. Scripture must distinguish salvation

from discipleship, relationship from fellowship, eternal life from reward, and spiritual security from physical judgment. When those distinctions disappear, every warning sign gets uprooted and placed outside the believer's bedroom window.

The practical answer to doubt is to return to God's record. Ask what you are trusting. If confidence rests upon baptism, church membership, family heritage, good works, a prayer, an emotional experience, or promised future performance, abandon those substitutes and believe the gospel now. Christ died for your sins, was buried, and rose again. If you have trusted Him, stop asking the flesh to countersign God's certificate. Read 1 John 5:9–13, John 5:24, John 6:47, Romans 5:1, Ephesians 1:13, and Romans 8 until God's voice becomes louder than the accuser's. Faith answers doubt by opening the Book, not by interrogating the thermometer.

Conclusion

God's birth certificate for the believer carries greater authority than memory, emotion, religious opinion, or human performance. The written record says eternal life has been given, that life is in God's Son, and the one who has the Son has life. Christ's finished work supplies the foundation, the empty tomb supplies heaven's receipt, and the Holy Ghost supplies the seal and inward witness. None depends upon the believer maintaining an emotional temperature. Feelings rise and fall like a thermometer hanging outside an open window; God's testimony does not move one degree.

The question is not whether you cried enough, prayed elegantly enough, remembered the date accurately enough, or performed consistently enough afterward. The question is whether you believed God's record concerning His Son. Christ died for your sins, was buried, and rose again. He promises everlasting life to the believer. Faith receives that promise because God gave it, not because the recipient feels worthy. Nobody is worthy except Christ, and that is precisely why assurance rests in Him.

A believer may doubt his birth without becoming unborn, lose joy without losing life, and stumble without falling out of Christ. He should confess sin, receive correction, restore fellowship, and walk in the Spirit, but he should never place Adam's trembling hand above God's written signature. Heaven did not issue salvation in disappearing ink. The certificate was written by the God who cannot lie, purchased by blood that cannot lose its value, and sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption.

Key Passage: John 10:27–30

Introduction

Religion has spent centuries turning eternal life into temporary probation. It tells the sinner that Christ will start the transaction if he promises to finish it, that grace will carry him until his flesh misses a payment, and that the Holy Ghost seals the soul with adhesive weaker than Adam's next failure. According to that arrangement, the believer is saved by grace but kept by works, born of God but sustained by flesh, given eternal life that may end, and placed into a family from which he may later become spiritually unborn. The terminology sounds biblical until somebody checks the definitions. If eternal life ends, it was never eternal. If incorruptible seed rots, it was never incorruptible. If the Spirit's seal breaks before "the day of redemption," God placed the wrong date upon His own package. If Christ's sheep perish after He said "they shall never perish," the Shepherd needs to revise the guarantee. The doctrine of conditional security does not protect holiness; it accuses God's words of exaggeration.

The new birth carries permanent consequences because everything responsible for it is eternal and divine. Its Author is God, its Agent is the Holy Ghost, its object is Jesus Christ, its seed is the living word, its gift is eternal life, its position is in Christ, its relationship is sonship, and its destination is the day of redemption. The sinner contributes no spiritual life to the birth and therefore possesses no power to reverse what God performed. He did not beget himself, place himself into Christ, justify himself, seal himself, or write his own name in heaven. Salvation is "of the Lord" from the first conviction to the final redemption. Religion imagines the flesh was too worthless to save itself but somehow becomes dependable enough to keep itself saved. That is like refusing to let a drunkard drive the ambulance to the hospital but handing him the keys for the trip home.

Eternal security must never be confused with divine permission for sin. A believer can grieve the Holy Ghost, quench His working, destroy fellowship, damage testimony, lose usefulness, invite chastening, suffer physical judgment, and lose reward at the judgment seat of Christ. Grace does not make rebellion harmless. It makes sonship permanent while placing the disobedient child under the correcting hand of a holy Father. Romans 6:1 asks, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" and answers, "God forbid." The same apostle who taught absolute security warned saved people about sowing to the flesh, defiling the body, provoking God, and watching their works burn. Security is not a pillow for carnality. It is the unshakable ground from which the believer can serve God without trying to purchase a relationship Christ already secured.

1. Birth Establishes a Relationship Conduct Cannot Reverse

Natural birth establishes a relationship independent of later conduct. A child may disobey his father, reject his upbringing, disgrace the family name, move across the world, change his surname, and deny the relationship publicly. None of those actions travels backward through history and prevents conception and birth from having occurred. He may become an estranged son, rebellious son, foolish son, or chastened son, but he does not become an unborn stranger. The earthly analogy is not the final authority, yet it illustrates the exact language God chose. Salvation is called birth because God imparts life and establishes relationship. If God intended the relationship to function like a temporary employment contract, He could have called it hiring. He called it birth.

John 1:12–13 says believers become the sons of God and are born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Since the believer did not produce the birth by human will, human will cannot reverse its divine origin. First John 3:9 adds, “his seed remaineth in him.” The seed does not remain until the child sins badly, loses confidence, changes churches, or wanders doctrinally. It “remaineth.” First Peter 1:23 identifies that seed as “incorruptible” and says the word by which the believer is born “liveth and abideth for ever.” God did not begin an eternal relationship with temporary materials. Heaven does not build everlasting life out of spiritual cardboard and leave it outside in Adam’s rain.

Adoption reinforces the same permanence. Romans 8:15 says believers have received “the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father,” and verse 17 says, “if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Adoption gives the believer the full standing and inheritance of a son. God is not testing him as a foster child while keeping the return paperwork nearby. The Holy Ghost bears witness that he is a child and becomes the earnest of the inheritance. Service may affect reward and reigning; sonship establishes heirship. A child can waste opportunities without changing his father’s identity. The prodigal son left the father’s house, wasted the father’s substance, lived among swine, and returned in disgrace, but his father still said, “this my son was dead, and is alive again.” The far country changed the son’s fellowship, condition, clothing, companions, and joy. It never changed his father.

2. Incorruptible Seed Produces Everlasting Life

First Peter 1:23 says the believer is “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.” Natural seed produces mortal life because it carries Adam’s corruption. Divine seed produces spiritual life after its own incorruptible nature. God established the law of reproduction in Genesis: seed brings forth after its kind. Corruptible seed cannot produce incorruption, and incorruptible seed cannot produce a life whose existence depends upon corruption preserving it. The believer’s flesh remains corrupt, but the new

man is “created in righteousness and true holiness.” The flesh may sin, suffer, decay, and die physically; the life born from God’s seed remains beyond its reach. Adam’s nature can damage the Christian’s walk, but it cannot crawl into God’s seed and rewrite its nature.

Jesus said, “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47). The believer has the life now, and the life is everlasting now. John 5:24 says he “hath everlasting life,” “shall not come into condemnation,” and “is passed from death unto life.” Every verb stands against conditional security. The believer is not slowly passing from death while hoping to reach life before another failure. He “is passed.” He is not waiting to receive life after a favorable final examination. He “hath” it. He is not threatened with returning to condemnation if his service declines. He “shall not” come into it. Religion reads three settled statements and somehow produces a question mark large enough to cover the page.

First John 5:11 explains where the life is kept: “this life is in his Son.” The life is not stored in the believer’s flesh, performance, faithfulness, emotions, memory, or ability to resist every temptation. It is in Christ. Colossians 3:3 says, “your life is hid with Christ in God.” That hiding place contains three layers of security: the believer’s life, with Christ, in God. Satan would need to enter heaven, conquer the Father, remove the Son, seize the life, corrupt the incorruptible seed, and undo the new birth. He could not keep Christ inside a guarded tomb for three days; he is not going to remove the believer from the risen Christ for eternity.

3. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost Preserve the Believer

The Father’s preserving power stands behind the believer’s security. First Peter 1:5 speaks of those “who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” The believer is not kept by the power of personality, willpower, religious discipline, or emotional confidence. He is kept by God’s power. Philippians 1:6 says, “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” God began the work and accepts responsibility for its completion. A contractor may abandon an unfinished building when money runs out or plans fail; God does not suffer from either difficulty. What omnipotence begins, faithfulness finishes.

The Son preserves those who belong to Him. Jesus said of His sheep, “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). “Never perish” needs no theological scaffolding. It means never perish. The believer is a man, and no man—including the believer himself—can pluck Christ’s sheep from the Shepherd’s hand. Verse 29 adds the Father’s hand, and verse 30 says, “I and my Father are one.” The sheep is held by the Son and the Father while religious doubt stands outside explaining that the grip depends upon the sheep’s hoof strength. Hebrews 7:25 says Christ “ever liveth to make intercession” for those who come to God by Him. The

Saviour who died for the believer now lives for him, and His intercession does not expire when the flesh fails.

The Holy Ghost seals the believer. Ephesians 1:13 says that after hearing the gospel and believing in Christ, the sinner is “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.” Ephesians 4:30 gives the duration: “whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” The seal identifies the believer as God’s purchased possession and guarantees the destination. Second Corinthians 1:22 calls the Spirit the “earnest,” the divine down payment guaranteeing the full inheritance. If a believer could lose salvation before bodily redemption, God would forfeit His earnest, break His seal, abandon His purchase, and miss the date He placed upon the package. The problem with conditional security is not that it thinks too little of the believer’s strength. It thinks too little of the Godhead’s faithfulness.

4. Standing in Christ Must Be Distinguished From Daily State

The believer’s standing is his fixed position in Jesus Christ. He is justified by faith, reconciled to God, accepted in the beloved, complete in Christ, made righteous in Him, and seated in heavenly places. Romans 8:1 declares, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” The standing depends upon being “in Christ,” not upon the daily condition of the flesh. Romans 8:33 asks, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” The highest Judge has rendered the verdict. No lower court composed of feelings, accusations, religious opinions, or human failures possesses jurisdiction to reverse it.

The believer’s state concerns his daily conduct, fellowship, obedience, joy, fruitfulness, and usefulness. That state can rise or fall dramatically. A Christian may walk in the Spirit today and yield to the flesh tomorrow. He may pray faithfully for a season and become neglectful, speak truth and later act hypocritically, or serve vigorously and then grow cold. Ephesians 4:30 warns him not to grieve the Holy Ghost, while 1 Thessalonians 5:19 says, “Quench not the Spirit.” The warnings prove that a sealed believer can resist the Spirit without driving Him away. If the Spirit departed every time He was grieved, nobody would remain sealed through the book of Ephesians.

When the believer sins, the remedy is restored fellowship, not repeated salvation. First John 1:9 instructs confession and promises cleansing. First John 2:1 says, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The relationship remains “with the Father.” Christ advocates for a child whose fellowship has been damaged, not a stranger requiring another birth. A son who comes home covered in mud needs washing, correction, and clean clothing. He does not need a new mother. Religion sends every dirty

believer back to the delivery room because it cannot distinguish a stained garment from a canceled birth certificate.

5. Chastening Proves Sonship Rather Than Canceling It

Hebrews 12 says, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Chastening is not God attempting to unsave a rebellious believer. It is the Father correcting a son He has already received. Verse 7 says, “God dealeth with you as with sons,” and verse 8 says those without chastisement are “bastards, and not sons.” The rod proves relationship. A judge punishes a criminal as a violator of law; a father chastens a child as a member of the household. The believer has been delivered from judicial condemnation but remains subject to paternal discipline. Confusing those two forms of judgment turns every painful correction into a threat of hell and every hardship into an argument over sonship.

First Corinthians 11 shows how severe chastening may become. Some Corinthian believers treated the Lord’s supper carelessly, and Paul wrote, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” “Sleep” refers to physical death. God judged their earthly bodies without sending their redeemed souls to hell. Verse 32 explains, “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” The distinction could not be clearer. They were judged and chastened precisely so they would not share the world’s condemnation. Physical death may remove a persistently rebellious believer from earthly service, but it does not reverse his justification.

Chastening may involve conviction, exposure, damaged relationships, loss of peace, bodily weakness, financial consequences, church discipline, reduced ministry, or physical death. Grace does not protect the believer from every harvest of foolish sowing. Galatians 6:7 warns, “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” A saved man who plants weeds should not demand roses because he knows eternal-security doctrine. God may forgive the sin eternally while allowing consequences to teach what ignored Scripture did not. Security does not remove the Father’s rod; it identifies whose hand holds it. God disciplines His children because He refuses to abandon them to the old nature.

6. Salvation, Service, and Reward Are Not the Same Thing

First Corinthians 3 distinguishes the believer’s foundation from the quality of his work. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Upon that foundation a Christian may build gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble. At the judgment seat of Christ, the fire tests “every man’s work of what sort it is.” If the work abides, the believer receives reward; if it burns, “he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” The works may be lost while the worker remains saved. Religion

regularly throws the man into the fire with his works because it cannot separate salvation from reward. Paul separates them in one sentence.

Paul's fear of becoming "a castaway" in 1 Corinthians 9:27 concerns disqualification in service, not loss of eternal life. He kept his body under subjection lest, after preaching to others, he should become unusable and lose the prize connected with faithful ministry. The context is running, striving, temperance, crowns, and reward. A runner removed from the race has not ceased to be his father's son; he has lost the opportunity to win the prize. Christian service requires discipline because saved men can waste their calling. God may place a carnal preacher on the shelf, remove a careless servant from usefulness, and expose hidden sin without erasing the new birth. A broken tool may remain the owner's property while no longer being fit for the workbench.

The judgment seat of Christ gives eternal security moral seriousness. Every believer will give account for service, motives, stewardship, words, and faithfulness. Rewards may be gained, crowns may be won, and reigning may be connected with suffering and fidelity. Second Timothy 2:12 says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." The denial in context concerns reigning, for the next verse says, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Christ may deny an unfaithful believer the privilege of reward and reign; He cannot deny a member of His own body without denying Himself. Salvation is free; the crown is earned. Sonship is permanent; service is accountable.

7. Warning Passages Must Not Be Used to Rewrite Paul's Gospel

Many supposed loss-of-salvation passages become clear when audience, covenant, time, context, and subject are respected. "Endure unto the end" in Matthew 24 appears in a Tribulation discourse involving Judea, the sabbath day, the abomination of desolation, false Christs, and worldwide persecution. It is not Paul's explanation of how a Church Age sinner receives justification. The branches burned in John 15 concern fruitlessness and discipleship, not the Holy Ghost removing a sealed believer from Christ's body. Paul becoming a castaway concerns service and reward. The man whose works burn in 1 Corinthians 3 remains saved. Right division does not remove warnings; it puts them on the roads where God planted them.

Hebrews 6 and 10 must likewise be handled within a Jewish epistle saturated with priesthood, covenant, sanctuary, sacrifices, and the age to come. Popular interpretations create impossible contradictions by teaching that a saved person can fall away but can never be restored, while the same preachers invite the supposed backslider to return every Sunday. Matthew 7 says to false workers, "I never knew you," not, "I knew you once and

later erased the relationship.” False profession and lost salvation are not the same condition. A man may perform miracles, cast out devils, preach, join, baptize, and remain unknown to Christ. Counterfeit birth certificates do not prove genuine children can be unborn.

Romans 8 supplies the final Church Age verdict. Neither tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, “nor any other creature” can separate the believer “from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The believer is included among created beings, so “any other creature” leaves no loophole for self-separation. Paul did not end the chapter with a hidden footnote reading, “unless the flesh has an unusually bad month.” The list reaches through earth, heaven, time, space, life, death, visible danger, and invisible power. Nothing separates because the believer is secure “in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Conclusion

The new birth is permanent because God does not perform temporary miracles with eternal words. The believer is born of incorruptible seed, given everlasting life, placed into Christ, made a son, sealed by the Holy Ghost, kept by God’s power, held in the hands of the Father and Son, defended by Christ’s intercession, and promised bodily redemption. Every part of salvation rests upon divine action. Adam did not start it, cannot sustain it, and cannot overturn it. The flesh is powerful enough to wreck fellowship, testimony, service, health, and reward. It is not powerful enough to make the Godhead break covenant with His own work.

This truth does not excuse sin. It gives the believer every reason to hate it. He belongs to God, his body has been purchased, the Spirit indwells him, the Father chastens him, and Christ will judge his service. He should walk in the Spirit, confess failure, obey the word, guard his testimony, redeem the time, and build with materials that survive the fire. But he does those things as a son serving his Father, not as a condemned stranger making monthly payments on eternal life. Obedience grows best from settled relationship; fear-driven religion produces servants hiding behind trees.

God’s children cannot be unborn. They may become disobedient, carnal, cold, ashamed, chastened, sidelined, or empty-handed at the judgment seat. They may lose joy, fellowship, usefulness, reputation, opportunity, reward, and even earthly life. They cannot lose the Christ in whom their eternal life is hidden. Religion keeps eternal life on a short leash because it wants the sinner dependent upon the kennel. God places the believer in Christ, locks the door from heaven’s side, and writes across the entrance: “They shall never perish.”

The New Birth — What It Means to Be Born Again

Key Passage: 1 John 5:11–13

Series Conclusion

After ten studies, the new birth ought to stand before us stripped of the religious advertising that has nearly buried it. “Born again” is not a political classification, denominational nickname, emotional slogan, family tradition, sacramental status, or cleaner version of the old life. It is the supernatural work of God by which a spiritually dead sinner receives life in Jesus Christ. The phrase has been used carelessly by men who would never tolerate such carelessness with their bank account, property deed, or medical diagnosis. They will demand exact language when discussing an earthly contract and then accept religious oatmeal when eternity is involved. Jesus Christ did not speak vaguely to Nicodemus. He said, “Ye must be born again.” The requirement was absolute because the condition was fatal. Nicodemus did not lack religion; he lacked life.

The line running through this entire series begins with Adam and ends in Christ. The first birth places every man in Adam’s fallen family, beneath sin, corruption, death, and condemnation. The second birth places the believer in Christ, where he receives righteousness, life, sonship, acceptance, and an eternal inheritance. Between those two positions lies every saving operation we have examined: the living word as incorruptible seed, the Holy Ghost’s quickening and regeneration, the believer’s union with Christ, the creation of the new man, entrance into God’s family, the Spirit’s inward witness, and the permanent security of everlasting life. Salvation is not a pile of unrelated theological words stacked in a seminary warehouse. It is one magnificent work of God viewed from several biblical directions.

These ten studies were never intended merely to add information to a religious notebook. The new birth demands a verdict. Either you have been born of God or you remain in Adam. Either you possess the Son or you do not possess life. Either your confidence rests in Christ’s finished work or it rests in something that cannot survive death. God does not recognize a neutral category filled with sincere people postponing the decision indefinitely. John 3:18 says, “he that believeth not is condemned already.” The sinner is not waiting to discover whether he will become condemned; he begins there. The gospel does not place him in danger. It tells him where he already stands and points to the only door out.

1. The First Birth Has Given Everything It Can Give

Natural birth gives physical life, personality, family connection, nationality, earthly opportunity, and a body through which the soul interacts with this world. It may place one child in a palace and another in poverty, one beneath Christian instruction and another

beneath pagan darkness, one among books and another among ignorance. Those circumstances matter tremendously in earthly life, but none changes the spiritual nature inherited through Adam. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Flesh may climb a social ladder, obtain degrees, accumulate money, govern nations, compose symphonies, and wear religious garments. At the top of every ladder it remains flesh. A higher perch does not change the bird.

The natural man's central problem is death. Ephesians 2:1 says he is "dead in trespasses and sins," and Ephesians 4:18 says he is "alienated from the life of God." He does not need a religious supplement added to an otherwise healthy constitution. He needs life from outside himself. Education cannot supply it because information is not life. Morality cannot supply it because restrained flesh remains flesh. Philosophy cannot supply it because speculation cannot raise the dead. Religion cannot supply it because ceremonies operate upon the outside. A corpse may be educated, washed, dressed, perfumed, photographed, and surrounded by flowers without becoming one ounce less dead.

The first birth also carries the body toward physical death. Romans 5:12 says death entered by sin and passed upon all men. Every aging face, weakening body, hospital bed, obituary, funeral procession, and cemetery testifies that Adam's inheritance has not improved. Modern man can communicate across continents in seconds and still cannot persuade one grave to return its occupant. He can photograph distant stars, split atoms, map the human genome, and store enough information to fill libraries, but the hearse continues arriving on schedule. Civilization has given death better lighting and softer music; it has not defeated it. The first birth gives a life the grave can take. Only the second gives life the grave cannot keep.

2. Every Religious Counterfeit Fails at the Point of Life

Water baptism cannot produce the new birth. It can picture the believer's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, provide public testimony, and answer a good conscience toward God, but water possesses no regenerating power. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before baptism. The thief entered paradise without baptism. Simon the sorcerer was baptized and remained in the bond of iniquity. Paul said, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." If water completed salvation, Paul's statement would separate his commission from the very act required to make the gospel effective. Water can remove dirt from flesh; it cannot remove sin from the soul. A baptism is a fine place for an obedient believer and a poor place to hide an unbeliever.

Reformation, church membership, and religious ancestry also fail. A sinner ought to abandon drunkenness, immorality, theft, profanity, violence, dishonesty, and every

destructive habit. Those changes may preserve his family, health, livelihood, reputation, and freedom. They still cannot give him life from God. Joining a church may place his name on a human roll, but no membership committee can beget a son of God. Christian parents may teach Scripture and provide a faithful example, but salvation does not pass through blood. God has no grandchildren. A man can inherit the family Bible, family pew, family hymnbook, and family cemetery plot without inheriting eternal life.

Emotional decisions cannot produce regeneration either. Conviction may cause trembling, sorrow may produce tears, a sermon may stir fear, and a song may awaken memories. None of those responses is the Saviour. Felix trembled and delayed. Agrippa was almost persuaded and remained lost. Judas regretted his betrayal, confessed innocent blood, returned the money, and died without Christ. Tears are not blood, remorse is not faith, and an aisle is not the body of Christ. Repeating a prayer may express faith, but words pronounced without heart reliance upon Christ are religious noise. Heaven does not operate a combination lock opened by the correct arrangement of syllables.

3. The New Birth Is God's Operation From Beginning to End

The believer is born again through incorruptible seed. First Peter 1:23 says the birth comes "by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." James 1:18 says, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." God does not beget His children through denominational traditions, private revelations, mystical impressions, or theological guesses. He uses His living word. That word exposes sin, destroys confidence in the flesh, reveals Jesus Christ, declares the gospel, and produces faith in the hearer. Romans 10:17 says, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Religious programs may excite a crowd, but only living seed can produce life.

The Holy Ghost performs the quickening work. Titus 3:5 calls salvation "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Ephesians 2:5 says God "hath quickened us together with Christ." The Spirit does not renovate the old nature; He imparts life and creates a new man. He convicts through the word, quickens the believing sinner, places him into Christ's body, indwells him, gives spiritual understanding, bears witness to sonship, and seals the believer unto the day of redemption. This is not emotional electricity generated by music or repetition. It is the operation of God. A great deal of religious motion can occur without one sinner being regenerated. A tornado produces motion too, but nobody calls the wreckage revival.

The object of saving faith is Jesus Christ and His finished gospel. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. He did not merely demonstrate love, inspire reform, or provide an example of

courage. He paid for sin. At Calvary He cried, "It is finished," and the resurrection placed heaven's receipt upon the sacrifice. The sinner receives that work through faith. He does not add baptism, law-keeping, sacraments, moral promises, or future perseverance to complete the payment. Christ did the work; faith receives the benefit. Grace hands the gift to an empty palm, while religion keeps trying to slip coins between the fingers.

4. God Creates a New Man While the Flesh Remains Flesh

Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The believer's position "in Christ" is the key. He has been taken from his condemned standing in Adam and placed into the risen Son of God by the Holy Ghost. His sins are forgiven, Christ's righteousness is imputed, his spirit is quickened, and he becomes part of a new creation. God does not merely give the old creature Christian interests. Salvation is not Adam learning church etiquette. It is the Creator commanding light to shine in a darkened heart and producing something religion cannot manufacture.

The new creature does not mean the believer's flesh becomes sinless. Paul said, "in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." The old nature remains corrupt, hostile, deceitful, and capable of every sin it committed before salvation. The new man, however, is "created in righteousness and true holiness." Galatians 5:17 says the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. The believer therefore experiences warfare beneath one roof. Before salvation the flesh ruled without a spiritual rival. After regeneration, the inward man agrees with God, delights in His truth, and opposes the old occupant. The battlefield exists because life entered.

This distinction protects the Christian from both sinless-perfection pride and salvation-doubting despair. Claiming the flesh has become sinless contradicts Paul, John, James, and every honest examination of human conduct. Concluding that every struggle proves the absence of salvation ignores the warfare Scripture plainly describes. The believer must reckon himself dead to sin, yield his members to God, walk in the Spirit, renew his mind through Scripture, and refuse provision for the flesh. Those commands concern practical sanctification, not the creation or preservation of sonship. The Christian fights from life, not for life.

5. The New Birth Brings the Believer Into God's Family

John 1:12 says those who receive Christ and believe on His name are given "power to become the sons of God." Every human being is God's creature, but every human being is not God's child. Jesus told religious unbelievers claiming divine fatherhood, "Ye are of your father the devil." Ephesians 2 calls fallen men "children of wrath." Universal fatherhood is religious sentiment trying to enter the family without receiving the Son. The sinner becomes

a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ, not through creation, sincerity, moral intention, or religious affiliation.

Regeneration gives life, and adoption gives standing and inheritance. Romans 8 says believers have received “the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” The Holy Ghost bears witness that they are God’s children, and “if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” The believer receives a Father, a household, access to the throne, divine discipline, an Advocate, brethren in Christ, and an eternal inheritance. Religion may offer membership in an institution. Christ brings the sinner home.

God also provides assurance of the relationship. First John 5:11 says, “this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” Assurance rests upon what God said, what Christ finished, and what the Holy Ghost performed. It does not rest upon remembering the exact emotional temperature of conversion, maintaining uninterrupted confidence, or producing a flawless record after salvation. A man may forget the date of his natural birth without becoming unborn. Likewise, a believer may experience doubt without losing life. Feelings rise and fall like a thermometer in an open window; God’s record does not move one degree.

6. The New Birth Is Permanent but Never Morally Careless

The believer is born of incorruptible seed, given everlasting life, placed into Christ, sealed by the Spirit, held by the Father and Son, and kept by God’s power. Jesus said of His sheep, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.” Ephesians 4:30 says the Holy Ghost seals them “unto the day of redemption.” Colossians 3:3 says their life is “hid with Christ in God.” Eternal security is not the believer boasting about his grip upon God. It is the believer resting in God’s grip upon him. If salvation depended upon the strength of the sheep, no shepherd would be necessary.

Security does not eliminate chastening. Hebrews 12 says the Lord chastens every son He receives. A Christian may grieve the Spirit, quench His working, lose fellowship, destroy testimony, waste usefulness, suffer physical consequences, and even die under divine judgment, as careless Corinthians did. The rod proves sonship rather than canceling it. A judge condemns a criminal; a father corrects a child. The believer has escaped judicial condemnation through Christ but remains under paternal discipline. Grace does not allow the child to burn the house without meeting the Father in the hallway.

Salvation must also be distinguished from service and reward. First Corinthians 3 says a believer’s works may burn while “he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” Paul’s fear of becoming a castaway concerned disqualification in service and loss of prize, not damnation of his soul. The judgment seat of Christ will examine motives, stewardship,

obedience, and workmanship. Crowns may be won, reward may be lost, and opportunities to reign may be forfeited. Salvation is free because Christ purchased it; reward is connected with faithful service. A believer can reach heaven smelling like smoke from a wasted life. That is eternal security, but it is not spiritual success.

7. The Final Question Is Whether You Have the Son

The conclusion of this series cannot be reduced to admiration for doctrine. First John 5:12 states, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." God presents two categories, not a fog bank filled with undecided religious people. You may possess baptism, membership, morality, ancestry, sincerity, knowledge, emotion, and religious experience while lacking the Son. Nicodemus arrived carrying nearly every credential religion could issue, and Christ told him he needed another birth. The question is not whether Christianity influences your life. The question is whether Christ is your life.

If your confidence rests upon anything besides Jesus Christ, abandon it. Do not wait for stronger feelings, a more dramatic experience, improved behavior, or a convenient religious setting. Christ died for your sins, was buried, and rose again. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is not promising God that the old nature will become dependable. It is confessing that the old nature has nothing God will accept and resting entirely upon the Saviour. The gospel does not invite you to help Christ save you. It announces that Christ finished what you could never begin.

Those already born of God should live as children who understand the price, dignity, security, and responsibility of their position. Feed the new man, walk in the Spirit, confess sin quickly, guard fellowship, honour the Father, proclaim the gospel plainly, and refuse every counterfeit that places sinners in water, institutions, or emotional experiences instead of Christ. A church can fill its membership roll while heaven remains unimpressed. The assignment is not to manufacture decisions. It is to preach the living word, exalt the crucified and risen Christ, and trust the Holy Ghost to produce life.

Final Conclusion

The new birth begins where human ability ends. The sinner cannot create life, forgive guilt, satisfy judgment, produce righteousness, defeat death, enter Christ, or seal himself unto redemption. God does it all. The Father planned and preserves, the Son purchased and intercedes, the Holy Ghost quickens and seals, and the word carries the incorruptible seed. Salvation leaves no room for human boasting because the corpse contributed nothing to the resurrection except the need for one.

The first birth placed you in Adam; the second places you in Christ. The first gave corruptible life; the second gives everlasting life. The first produced flesh; the second

produces a new man. The first began a journey toward physical death; the second secures victory over the second death. Born once, a man dies twice. Born twice, he may die physically, but the second death has no power over him. That is not a religious slogan. It is the difference between Adam's inheritance and Christ's gift.

"Ye must be born again" remains heaven's final verdict upon every descendant of Adam. God will not accept a repaired corpse, baptized corpse, educated corpse, moral corpse, church-member corpse, or emotionally enthusiastic corpse. He demands life, and that life exists only in His Son. Religion teaches the dead to sit upright in the coffin. Jesus Christ opens the grave.

A VERSEQUEST BIBLE STUDY CHART

THE NEW BIRTH

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BORN AGAIN

Natural birth gives Adam's life. Spiritual birth gives Christ's life.
Religion may reform the flesh; only God can regenerate the sinner.

KEY PASSAGE — JOHN 3:7

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

THE CENTRAL TRUTH

The first birth puts a man in Adam.
The second birth puts a believer in Christ.
The issue is not improvement, but life from God.

THE FIRST BIRTH — "THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE FLESH"

ORIGIN— Natural parents; "born of water" and flesh (**John 3:5-6**)

SEED— Corruptible human seed; Adam's fallen image (**Gen. 5:3**)

POSITION— "In Adam"; under sin, death, and condemnation (**Rom. 5:12**)

NATURE— Flesh remains flesh; educated, baptized, or religious

INHERITANCE— A dying body and a nature unable to please God (**Rom. 8:8**)

DESTINY— Born once, die twice if Christ is refused (**Rev. 20:14-15**)

THE GOSPEL
CHRIST DIED
AND ROSE AGAIN

HEAR → BELIEVE
SEALED BY THE SPIRIT
Ephesians 1:13

THE SECOND BIRTH — "THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT"

ORIGIN— "Of God"; the life-giving work of the Holy Ghost (**John 1:13**)

SEED— The incorruptible word of God, living for ever (**1 Pet. 1:23**)

POSITION— "In Christ"; accepted, justified, complete (**2 Cor. 5:17**)

NATURE— A new man "created in righteousness and true holiness"

INHERITANCE— Sonship, the Spirit of adoption, and joint-heirship (**Rom. 8:15-17**)

DESTINY— Born twice, secure from the second death (**John 5:24**)

1-2 THE NATURAL MAN

- **Eph. 2:1**— "dead in trespasses and sins"
- **Eph. 4:18**— alienated from the life of God
- **Rom. 8:7-8**— the flesh cannot please God
- **1 Cor. 2:14**— receives not spiritual things
- **Eph. 2:13**— "children of wrath" by nature

DIAGNOSIS: Not sick religion—but spiritual death.

3 GOD COMMANDS LIFE

- **Eph. 2:4-5**— "hath quickened us" with Christ
- **John 5:24**— passed from death unto life
- **John 11:43**— Lazarus pictures divine quickening
- **Rom. 6:4**— risen life begins a new walk
- **Col. 2:13**— quickened and forgiven together

MIRACLE: God does not coach death; He creates life.

4 THE SEED THAT CANNOT ROT

- **1 Pet. 1:23**— born of "incorruptible" seed
- **James 1:18**— begotten "with the word of truth"
- **Rom. 10:17**— faith comes by hearing the word
- **1 Cor. 15:1-4**— the gospel declares Christ's work
- **1 Pet. 1:25**— the word endureth for ever

RESULT: Eternal seed does not produce temporary life.

5 REGENERATION, NOT REPAIR

- **Titus 3:5**— "washing of regeneration"
- **Titus 3:5**— "renewing of the Holy Ghost"
- **Eph. 2:8-9**— grace excludes human works
- **Rom. 4:5**— God justifies the ungodly believer
- **Gal. 3:3**— flesh cannot perfect the Spirit's work

DISTINCTION: Reformation alters conduct; regeneration gives life

6 A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST

- **2 Cor. 5:17**— "he is a new creature"
- **1 Cor. 12:13**— baptized by one Spirit into one body
- **Col. 2:10**— complete in Christ
- **Rom. 8:1**— no condemnation to those in Christ
- **2 Cor. 4:6**— God shines life into darkness

POSITION: Not Adam improved, but the believer in Christ.

7 TWO NATURES, ONE HOUSE

- **Rom. 7:18**— no good thing dwells in the flesh
- **Eph. 4:22**— the old man is corrupt
- **Eph. 4:24**— the new man is created holy
- **Gal. 5:17**— flesh and Spirit oppose each other
- **Gal. 5:16**— victory comes by walking in the Spirit

WARFARE: The conflict proves life entered the house.

8-9 FAMILY AND ASSURANCE

- **John 1:12-13**— received as sons; born of God
- **Rom. 8:15-17**— adopted children and heirs
- **Rom. 8:16**— the Spirit witnesses with our spirit
- **1 John 5:11-13**— written certainty of eternal life
- **Gal. 4:6**— the Spirit cries, "Abba, Father"

CERTAINTY: Faith rests on God's record, not feelings.

10 GOD'S CHILDREN CANNOT BE UNBORN

- **John 10:28**— "they shall never perish"
- **Eph. 4:30**— sealed "unto the day of redemption"
- **1 Pet. 1:5**— kept by the power of God
- **Col. 3:3**— life hid with Christ in God
- **Heb. 12:6-8**— chastening proves sonship

PERMANENCE: Fellowship may break; birth does not.

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIONS

RELATIONSHIP is fixed by birth • **FELLOWSHIP** is affected by walk
SALVATION is a free gift • **SERVICE** can gain or lose reward • **STANDING** is perfect; **STATE** must grow
SPIRIT BAPTISM places the believer into Christ • **WATER BAPTISM** testifies outwardly after salvation

COUNTERFEITS THAT CANNOT GIVE BIRTH

- Water baptism
- Church membership
- Religious ancestry
- Moral reform
- Emotional excitement
- Words without faith

TEST: Have you believed God's record concerning his Son? (**1 John 5:10-12**)

BORN ONCE: DIE TWICE • BORN TWICE: DIE ONCE — RELIGION CAN POLISH A COFFIN; JESUS CHRIST OPENS THE GRAVE.