

REALITY AND THE NEW BIRTH

- A. Introduction: We've been talking about learning to see reality as it truly is or the way things really are so that we can demonstrate the will of God in our lives. Reality is everything as God sees it. Rom 12:2
1. We began with God's plan and purpose in creation and salvation. God created human beings to become His sons and daughters through partaking of His uncreated, eternal life. Titus 1:2; Eph 1:4,5
 - a. Gen 2:9 makes reference to two trees in Eden—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If Adam and Eve had chosen to eat from the tree of life it would have been an expression of submission to and dependence on God resulting in union with the life in Him.
 - b. Adam instead chose independence from God through sin which in turn brought corruption and death to the human race. Men and women are born sinners (born into a fallen race, with a sin nature) under the dominion of death. Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12, 19; Rom 6:23; Eph 2:1-3; etc.
 1. God knew this would happen and devised plan to undue the damage done by mankind's disobedience and then carry out His original intention. That plan is called redemption.
 2. The goal of redemption or salvation is transformation—transforming unrighteous sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God.
 2. God accomplishes this transformation through the Cross and the new birth. The ultimate purpose of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus was and is to give eternal life to men—to give the uncreated life in God to men and women. John 10:10; John 3:16
 - a. Jesus joined us in death at the Cross so that we could join Him in life through the new birth. He went to the Cross for us as us and was punished in our place for our sins. Heb 2:14,15
 1. Once the price was paid, because He had no sin of His own, death could no longer hold Him and He was raised up. Because He was there for us as us, when He was given life so were we.
 2. Eph 2:5--Even when we were dead [slain] by [our own] shortcomings and trespasses, He made us alive together in fellowship and in union with Christ.—He gave us the very life of Christ Himself, the same new life with which He quickened Him. (Amp)
 - b. Through the death of Jesus at the Cross justice has been satisfied in regard to our sin and God can now deal with us as though we never sinned and transform us into holy, righteous sons.
 1. When we believe on Jesus the life that raised Jesus from the dead comes into our spirit (our inward being). Our spirit is regenerated and we are literally born of God. Titus 3:5; I John 5:1
 2. Spiritual death (our sin nature) is driven out and replaced by the life and nature of God. Eternal life becomes our present-tense possession. I John 5:11,12; II Pet 1:4
 3. Christianity is not a belief system or a code of ethics and behavior. It is a living, vital, organic union with God through Jesus Christ. Salvation is human nature being made alive with the life of God.
 - a. Through the new birth we are born of God. We literally become partakers of the eternal, uncreated life in God through Jesus Christ. We are united to the life in Him as truly as a branch to a vine.
 - b. This life transforms us from sinners into sons and empowers us to live as sons and daughters of God. We want to continue our discussion in this lesson.
- B. Jesus made a number of statements before He went to the Cross that make clear the ultimate goal of His death, burial and resurrection—to make it possible for men and women to be united to the life in God. His words reveal that at conversion something real comes into us, something not there prior to salvation.
1. John 4:6-14--Jesus had a conversation with a woman at a well. She was surprised that He spoke to her.
 - a. In response He said: If you knew who you were talking to, you would ask Me for living water. He further told her that the water He gives would spring up to everlasting life.
 1. v14--But the water that I give him shall become a spring of water welling up (flowing, bubbling) continually within him unto (into, for) eternal life. (Amp)
 2. v14--Indeed the water which I shall give shall be within him a living spring bubbling up not only all through this life, but also in the endless life to come (Riggs Paraphrase).

- b. The example Jesus gave suggests two things about what He was going to do: One, He'll put something inside men and women and two, it will provide a continuous source of supply.
2. John 6:22-65--Jesus used one of the times He multiplied fish and loaves as a teaching moment. He told the crowd: Don't work for meat (bread) that perishes, but rather for that which gives eternal life. This meat is received through believing on the One God has sent (v26-29).
- a. v33--The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. (NLT). v35;48--I am that bread. v40;47--Believe on me to receive life. v54--The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life. Note Jesus equates eating and drinking with believing.
- b. People mistakenly say that Jesus is referring to receiving communion as the source of eternal life.
1. That is not what Jesus had in mind. Eating and drinking is another word picture, just like water and well or vine and branch. When you eat you take food into you. It becomes part of you. When we believe on Jesus we receive His life and it is absorbed by, into, our spirit.
 2. Jesus equates the point He was making with the relationship He had with His Father. v56,57 Jesus lived by the Father. He didn't live through eating the Father's flesh and blood. He was in union with His Father and lived by the Father's life in His human spirit. John 5:26
- c. When some in the crowd misinterpreted Jesus' words to mean they must eat His actual flesh and drink His blood, He made it clear that He was not speaking of physical, material elements but of invisible, spiritual realities. v63
3. The night before Jesus was crucified He made His meaning even clearer. Jesus had begun to prepare His disciples for the fact that He was soon going to leave them. John 14
- a. v1-7--At the Last Supper He told them that He was returning to His Father, but not to be troubled because they would be reunited. He further said no one could come to the Father but through Him.
- b. Philip then said: Show us the Father. Jesus replied: You've seen Me, therefore you've seen Him, because I show the Father. I speak His words and do His works by His power in Me. v8-11
1. v11--the Father who always remains in union with me is doing these things (Williams); the Father who lives continually in Me does the works; who ever dwells in me (Montgomery)
 2. v12--In the context of showing the Father by His words and actions produced in and through Him by His Father Jesus said: Those who believe on Me will do the same.
 - A. Jesus is God become a man without ceasing to be God. While on earth He did not live as God; He lived as a man in union with and dependence on the life of His Father.
 - B. In doing so He shows us what sons of God look like -- how they live and act. Jesus is the pattern for God's family. Rom 8:29; I John 2:6
- c. Jesus said that in that day (the period following the resurrection) the same kind of relationship will be available to men. John 14:20--At that time you will know that I am in union with my Father and you are in union with me and I am in union with you. (Williams)
1. At the Cross Jesus paid the price for sin and God can now legally indwell us by His life and Spirit and make us literal sons and daughters through new birth. His life in us becomes and remains a continual source of life and power.
 2. Jesus closed out that portion of the evening with a prayer. John 17:20-22--It is not for them only (His original disciples) that I make this request. It is also for those who through their message come to believe in me. Let them all be one. Just as you, Father, are in union with me and I am with you, let them be in union with us, so that the world may believe that you sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, so that they may be one just as we are, I in union with them and you with me, so that they may be perfectly united (Goodspeed).
 - A. This is what was on Jesus' mind as He prepared to go to the Cross. This is why He came—to give us life through union with the life in Him. This is something He wants us to know. Be encouraged that He'll help us to see it.
 - B. Then, too, in that day when you shall see me again, you will come to know more clearly than is possible to you now the intimate spiritual union that exists between me and the

Father and between me and you (Riggs Paraphrase)

- C. Something real comes into us at the new birth—something supernatural: the uncreated life and nature of God. We must now learn to live and walk by the life of God in us. How do we do it? The Bible has good news for us. If you are born again you are living by the life of God. That's what God's Word says.
1. Before we were born again we were dead (cut off from the life of God in our spirit) but now we are alive (possess the life of God). He who has the Son has life. John 3:36; John 5:24; I John 5:12
 - a. You have been born again by receiving the life of God into your spirit. You are now alive with the life of God. You are living because of the life of God in you. You are living by the life of God.
 - b. You are alive by or because of the life of God in you. You are therefore living by the life of God. It is happening in you right now.
 2. One of the word pictures Jesus used to describe our relationship to Him subsequent to the Cross (which made possible the new birth) is vine and branch. John 15:1-6
 - a. A branch is alive with the life of the vine. It is living by the life of the vine, by virtue of the fact that it is union with the vine.
 1. John 15:4,5--You must remain in union with me and I will remain in union with you. Just as no branch by itself can bear fruit unless it remains united to the vine, so you cannot unless you remain in union with me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whosoever remains in union with me and I in union with him will bear abundant fruit, because you cannot do anything cut off from union with me. (Williams)
 2. Note that Jesus says the only thing the branch must do to produce outward evidence of the life within is be in union with the vine. The implication is clear: You have what you need and can do what you need to do because of your union with me.
 - b. In the last lesson we discussed the fact that your spirit fills your entire body (Luke 16:19-31). Christ is now your life (Col 3:4). Jesus is the life of your spirit now. Your spirit is the life of your body (James 2:26). Therefore, Jesus is the life of your body (Rom 8:11; Rom 5:10).
 1. In you, in your spirit, there is no trace of death (sickness, weakness, inability, lack, etc.). In you is life (strength, health, peace, joy, patience, etc.)
 2. Your spirit, which is alive with the life of God, is a well or source of life for your entire being. II Cor 4:16--The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength. (Phillips)
 3. We are living by the life of God because we are born again. We must now learn to walk in the light of it. That means: Know what we are and have through our union with Christ and believe it. I John 5:4
 - a. God has chosen to work in our lives cooperation with us through faith or when we believe what He says over and above what we feel. How can two walk together unless they agree? Amos 3:3
 - b. The challenge for most of us is that we put more stock in what we see and feel than in what God says. We get our picture of reality from what we see and feel.
 1. When someone says "Learn to walk by the life of God in you" we try to do or feel something. We look and feel and see no change in us or our circumstances and say: This isn't working.
 2. You've missed the point. This isn't a technique to get results. It's about changing your perception of reality and walking according to reality as it truly is. You are alive with, living by, the life of God. He says so. When you know and believe it your experience changes.
 - A. Col 2:6--Since, then, you have received the Christ, even Jesus the Lord, conduct yourselves in the consciousness of union with Him. (Wade)
 - B. Learn to live with the consciousness that God is in you. The Greater One is in you to work in and through you. Become God-inside minded. I John 4:4
 4. Being alive with the life of God doesn't mean we won't ever feel bad or face trouble. It means we know that the resurrection life of God inside us will get us through.
 - a. Consider the Apostle Paul's testimony about himself. Gal 2:20--I died with Christ at the Cross but

I am alive. I am alive because Christ lives in me. Remember, he was the one who was commissioned by Jesus to preach union with Christ. Col 1:27

1. In the context of the knowledge that he had a treasure in an earthen vessel Paul said of the many troubles he faced: We are troubled on every side yet not distressed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed. II Cor 4:7-9

2. v10,11--Always carrying in the body the liability and exposure to the same putting to death that the Lord Jesus suffered, so that the [resurrection—] life of Jesus also may be shown forth by and in our bodies. For we who live are constantly [experiencing] being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, that the [resurrection—] life of Jesus may also be evidenced through our flesh which is liable to death. (Amp)

b. Jesus appeared to Paul a number of times to give him the information he lived by and taught (Acts 26:16; Gal 1:12). Even though not at the Last Supper, Paul would have known what Jesus said.

1. John 16:33--I have told you these things, that you through union with me may have peace. In the world you have trouble; but be courageous! I have conquered the world. (Williams)

2. John 16:33--And now my words are finished. I have spoken them that, in all the life which you live in communion with me, you may have peace—a constant stay for your hearts amid the tribulation of the world. In the world you will have tribulation through the antagonism of men and the trials of suffering, but be of good courage. I have overcome the world. Its temptations and hostilities have not once gained the upper hand over me. In my strength you, too, shall overcome and in all the struggle have my peace. Be of good courage. (Riggs Paraphrase).

D. Conclusion: We have a lot more to say. But consider these points as we close. If you are born again there is something in you that was not there before. God is now in you by His life through your union with Christ. If you are born again you are alive. You are living by the life of God in your spirit.

1. God is in you by His life. He works in our lives from the inside out. You can't make it happen. You don't have to make it happen. You only have to believe it.

2. You didn't produce the new birth in your spirit. You believed God's Word and the Holy Spirit did it. The branch doesn't have to make fruit grow. The life of the vine will produce it through the union.

a. Take time to think about all of this. Think about, meditate on, the scriptures that describe what happened to us at the new birth, what is true about us because we are in union with Christ.

b. When you know something to be a fact it changes your perception of reality. What you believe and how you act is based on your perspective. Don't let what you see and feel paint your picture of reality. Let God's Word show you the way things really are.

3. When you know and believe that God is working in you by His life and Spirit your experience will change. More next week!