

BELIEVE THEN SEE

- A. Introduction: We are working on learning to see reality as it truly is (the way things really are according to God) so that we can walk in the light of it and effectively demonstrate His will in the earth. Rom 12:1,2
1. Part of that involves learning to see ourselves as we truly are in relation to God. As Christians, we are born of God through the new birth. I John 5:1
 - a. God created human beings with the capacity to receive His life into our innermost being (our spirit). When we believe on Jesus God gives us eternal life and we are born again. Eternal life is the uncreated life in God, the being and substance of God Himself. John 1:4; John 5:26
 - b. The Bible uses three word pictures to describe the believer's relationship to Christ. All depict union and shared life: John 15:5 (vine and branch), Eph 1:22,23(head and body), Eph 5:31,32 (husband and wife).
 1. When we believe on Jesus we are united to the uncreated eternal life in God. In John 3:16, the words "Believeth in" are literally "believeth into" in the original Greek language.
 2. I John 5:11--And this testimony is that God has given us eternal life, and this life is given through union with His Son. (Williams)
 - c. If you're born again there's something in your spirit that was not there before you believed, eternal life, which is the life and nature of God. It is a present-tense possession. You are now a partaker of the substance and being of God. I John 5:12; II Pet 1:4; John 3:36; John 6:47
 1. Whatever is in that life is in you now because that life is in you. I Cor 6:17--But the man who is in union with the Lord is spiritually one with Him. (Williams)
 2. The condition of your spirit is the basis of your identity. You are born of God, a new creature through your union with Christ. II Cor 5:17--So if anybody is in union with Christ he is the work of a new creation; the old condition has passed away, a new condition has come. (Williams)
 - d. Jesus is now in us by His life as our unceasing source of life to continually enable us to walk as He walked in this life, to continually enable us to bear much fruit. Fruit is outward evidence of the life within. I John 2:6
 2. Through the new birth we receive more than forgiveness of sins. We receive a new nature, the life of God. Christianity is not about being good and trying hard. It's about transformation. We are transformed from unholy, unrighteous children of the devil into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God by receiving eternal life.
 - a. The new birth takes place in our spirit and is the beginning of a process that will ultimately transform our entire being, conforming us to the image of Christ when our body is resurrected or glorified. Rom 8:29,30; Phil 3:20,21; I John 3:2; I Cor 15:51-53; etc.
 - b. Our soul (mind and emotions) and body were not directly affected by the new birth. But it is God's plan that we have outward expressions of these inward changes in our in our soul and body.
 1. Not only did God create us with the capacity to receive His life in our innermost being, it is His desire that we learn to live by the power of His life in us and express Him to the world around us.
 2. II Cor 5:15--Christ died for us all, so that being alive should no longer mean living with our own life, but with his life who died for us and has risen again. (Knox)
 - c. This won't automatically happen. We must know what we are and have because we are born of God and believe it in order to experience it now in this life.
 1. We must learn to see ourselves as we truly are so we can walk in it. II Cor 5:16--From this moment on, I do not estimate anybody by the standard of outward appearances. Although I once did estimate Christ by this standard, I do no do so any longer. (Williams)
 2. When we know what we are because we're born of God and believe it, we will experience the effects of our union with Christ in this life. We want to continue our discussion in this lesson.

- B. We hear a lesson like this and are inspired to try to “feel” or detect the life of God in us. We try to draw it out of us and make something happen and get frustrated when it doesn’t. But we’re trying to do God’s part instead of our part. God’s part is to be our life or empowering ability. Our part is to believe He is our life.
1. One of the examples the Bible uses to describe our relationship to Christ is Vine and branch. John 15:5
 - a. Such word pictures cannot fully describe our relationship to God because we are talking about an Infinite Being who has united Himself to finite beings. But we do get helpful insight.
 1. Jesus is in us by His life to produce fruit or outward evidence of His life within. A branch doesn’t have to make fruit grow. It simply has to be united to the vine and partake of the life of the vine.
 2. John 15:5--I am the vine itself, you are the branches. It is the man who shares my life and whose life I share who proves fruitful. (Phillips)
 - b. God’s life in us because of our union with Him will do what it is supposed to do if we will believe. It’s not up to us to produce the experience of Christ as our life. He is our life. We are alive because He is in us.
 - c. Our part is to know and believe that God is in us by His life. Results (producing the experience) are God’s part.
 2. Jesus is in us by His life to enable us to walk as He walked when He lived on earth as a man. 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 dependence on the life of His Father in Him (John 5:26; John 6:57; John 14:10; etc.) as an example to us of how sons and daughters of God live and walk.
 - a. Jesus, as a man, bore fruit. The works that He did were a demonstration of the Father in Him, of His union with the Father.
 1. Jesus did the works (or exercised His will and obeyed His Father) but the Father in Him provided the ability. John 14:10--But the Father who always remains in union with me is doing these things Himself. (Williams)
 2. Jesus said that, following His resurrection, the same kind of union relationship He had with His Father would be available to us through the new birth. John 14:20
 - b. Jesus is now in us by His life to help us, empower us, enable us to live in obedience to the Father, to walk in love toward our fellow man, and to do the works He did. John 14:12
 1. When we believe God’s Word that we (in our spirit) are strong, righteous, patient, loving, healed) God by His life in us does His work of building that reality into our soul and body.
 2. This isn’t a gimmick or a technique we develop to produce results in our lives. This comes out of a changed perception of reality. Through the Word of God we come to know what He has made us through the new birth and we believe it because it is so.
 3. We’ve talked much about Paul, a man who had outward demonstration of the life of God within him. Gal 2:20--Paul knew he was in union with, a partaker of, the life of God. He said that he lived by faith in the Son of God. Consider some statements he made about his picture of reality.
 - a. Paul expected Jesus to be in and through him all he needed in every situation and experienced it.
 1. In the context of suffering affliction, tribulation, calamity, distress, persecution, hunger, destitution, peril, or sword Paul was able to declare: I am more than a conquer through Jesus, through union with Christ. Rom 8:35-37
 2. In the context of being imprisoned he declared: I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me—I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me (Phil 4:13, Amp); I am ready for anything through the strength of the one who lives within me (Phil 4:13, Phillips).
 3. In the context of the great labor involved in preaching the gospel he said: For this I am toiling and struggling by His active energy which is mightily working in me. (Col 1:29, Williams)
 - b. He understood that we have resurrection life in us. We need to know and walk in the light of it.

1. Phil 2:12,13--Work out—cultivate, carry out to the goal and fully complete—your own salvation with reverence and awe...[Not in your own strength] for it us God Who is all the while effectually at work in you—energizing and creating in you the power and the desire—both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight. (Amp)
 2. Work out, in the Greek, means to fully accomplish. The goal of salvation is transformation -- the inward changes showing up on the outside. Paul said we are to work toward that with the knowledge that God worketh in us (same word used in Col 1:29). That Greek word means to be active, effective.
 - c. We see this theme over and over in Paul’s writings, the idea that God is working in us to enable, empower, and transform us outwardly by the power of His life within us.
 1. Heb 13:20,21--Now may...God...strengthen (complete, perfect) and make you what you ought to be, and equip you with everything good that you may carry out His will; [while He Himself] works in you and accomplishes that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. (Amp)
 2. Rom 8:11--Yea, if the spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead be dwelling in you, He who raised Christ from the dead shall endow with life also your dying bodies, by His Spirit which dwells within you. (Conybeare)
 3. Rom 5:10--It is much more [certain], now that we are reconciled, that we shall be saved, [daily delivered from sin’s dominion] through His [resurrection] life. (Amp)
 - d. Paul prayed for Christians that they would know and experience this resurrection life and power.
 1. Eph 1:19,20--And [so that you can know and understand] what is the immeasurable and unlimited and surpassing greatness of His power in and for us who believe, as demonstrated in the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. (Amp)
 2. Eph 3:16--May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the (Holy) Spirit [Himself]—indwelling your innermost being and personality. (Amp)
 3. Eph 3:20--Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think. (Amp)
- C. Our part in all of this is to know and believe. But we struggle with this for a number of reasons. Consider:
1. Paul made the statement that we walk by faith and not by sight (II Cor 5:7) in the context of inward ability that shows up outwardly to empower us to deal with life’s hardships. Most of us walk by sight.
 - a. When we feel good and all is well we believe everyone of the verses cited so far in this lesson. But as soon as sight and feelings tell us something different, all of our “faith” dissipates.
 1. Christians often assess themselves based only on what they see and feel in the parts of their makeup that were not directly affected by the new birth (mind, emotions, and body) and conclude that they are weak, unworthy failures rather than conquerors born of God. I John 5:4
 2. Faith is not sight. The only time you can have and exercise faith is when you cannot see or feel what God says. We must become persuaded of reality as it truly is according to God to the point where we believe what He says even when we don’t feel it.
 - b. We have to take time to build faith in the fact that God is in us by His life to empower and enable us to walk as Jesus walked. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Go over the verses in these lessons. Ask God to help you see reality as it truly is. Eph 1:19; John 14:20
 2. We must understand that we have something in us that was not in us before we were born again. We have the uncreated, eternal life of God in us.
 - a. Because we don’t know this, we spend a lot of time asking God to give us what we already have in us. Oh God: Make me more patient. Give me more joy. I need more peace. Give me wisdom.

Give me healing. I need strength. I need more love.

b. Those are all in you because the life of God is in you. God has already given you those things by uniting you to the life in Him. God now wants to work in you and through you (from the inside out) all that He has provided through the new birth.

1. II Pet 1:3--His divine power has given us everything we need for our physical and spiritual life. This has come to us through our getting to know Him who has called us to share His glory and virtue. (Norlie)

2. II Cor 1:21--It is God who brings us, and you with us, into union with Christ, and so strengthens us. (20th Cent)

c. We have a lot of ideas which we think are biblical, but they are nothing more than religious platitudes. We say things like this: God brought this trial into my life to make me more patient.

1. God does not work **ON** us through outward circumstances. He works **IN** us by His life and Spirit. That's not to say that He can't use circumstances and bring good out of them. He most certainly does (Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11). Trials can give us an opportunity to exercise what is in us because we are born again (James 1:3). (Lessons for another time)

2. Trials don't create fruit. That's like saying that a weevil attack or a fungus growth on a tomato vine will cause it to be more fruitful. No, both will weaken and kill the plant. Fruit is outward evidence of the life within.

d. When your flesh (the unchanged parts of you, your soul and body) are deficient in some way (weak, impatient, unloving, sickly), recognize that God is in you by His life to help you with what you need.

1. Pray like this: Lord, I thank You that You are in me by Your life. Thank You that You are my strength, You are my joy. Thank You that Your power in me is greater than what has come against me. Thank You that You're working in me that which is well pleasing in Your sight.

2. Take the verses we've discussed in this lesson and put your name in them (personalize them). Meditate on them. Think about them. Build your faith in the Greater One in you. Build your faith in the fact that through union with Christ God, by His life, is in you.

3. Jesus is our unceasing source of life to continually enable us to walk as He walked, to continually enable us to bear much fruit.

D. Conclusion: Here's how most of us live: We see and feel, therefore we believe. That's backwards. We believe first, then we see. More next week!