

## Spiritual Renewal

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At the time of the apostle Paul the city of Corinth was filled with shrines and temples, but the most prominent was the temple of Aphrodite on the top of an 1,800 foot promontory. Worshippers of the goddess of love made free use of the 1,000 consecrated prostitutes. This cosmopolitan center thrived on corrupt commerce, entertainment, and immorality. Pleasure seekers went there to spend money on a holiday from morality. With the affluence of the area also came a societal attitude of materialism, greed, and ingratitude. Corinth became so notorious for its evils that it became a synonym for debauchery and prostitution. And this was the worldly influence bombarding the Christians in Corinth. In a sense, it was the Las Vegas of its time.

In II Corinthians, the apostle Paul wrote of his deep concern that the Corinthian Christians, by harboring Judaizing intruders and dabbling in sin, would contribute to the weakening of their relationship with God and each other. And rather than drawing closer in unity of the Spirit, the unthankful influence of the society around them had also encouraged their unthankfulness. Paul was greatly relieved by Titus' report that many of the Corinthians had repented of the rebelliousness against Paul's authority. However, a minority of opposition was still defiant, evidently led by a group of Judaizers.

A Judaizer in Corinth was a person who tried to impose Jewish practices upon the Gentiles as conditions for their salvation and for Christian fellowship. It does not appear that Paul's opponents in Corinth were insisting on circumcision as occurred in Galatia or on the calendar observances, as did the opposition of Colossae. Their persistent bombardment of the church in Corinth with theological arguments that had little or nothing to do with salvation drove the people into factions and into frustrations in their relationships with each other. And some had reached the point of little or no appreciation for their brethren or the ministry.

In II Corinthians 12, Paul cited his own qualifications and what may look like a self-apology, but it is not that he cared what others thought of him. He knew himself to be right with God, and was not overly-concerned about what others thought. He was not trying to win their approval. He reminded them of his ministerial authority before telling them of his observation regarding their worldly tendencies to reflect the spirit of the world.

**II Corinthians 12:20-21** For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.

Paul is speaking here of some people who attended God's church. Their conversion is questionable at best. In other words, they were not acting very converted. Contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, and so on, all produced by pride and unthankfulness.

Now, I want to take a look at the each of these unchristian characteristics, but not that I am pointing the finger at anyone in the church, because what I am trying to do here today is show you a contrast between the unconverted and those who receive God's Holy Spirit and what a difference there is. These are going to be brief.

Contention is striving in contrast or rivalry to advance your own argument. A person with a contentious attitude has a quarrelsome spirit, uncontrolled. Where can this lead? How ridiculous can it get? Let me give you an example: Bobby Meyer, telling a Washington Post reporter that a contributing factor to her pending divorce was her husband's nasty comments about her watching the Weather Channel for hours at a time, "To tell you the truth, I found it very hard to understand how he could just sit there and watch old episodes of the same crime show again and again. The weather is always new." Keep that word *new* in your mind, because it is key to the whole sermon. It did not take much did it.

There may be some humor in that, but the point should be well taken. That contentions destroy relationships, no matter how silly the reason. Proverbs 13:10 exposes a major cause. "By pride comes only contention, but with the well-advised is wisdom." So to be well advised, we must be willing to ask advice in humility and truly wanting to learn from others, and we must swallow our pride and allow others to have an opinion without criticizing them. We are certainly seeing that as a problem today with all of the confusion in the mainstream media and it has even carried over into the churches, sadly.

The next one, jealousy, is intolerance or hostility toward a rival or toward one believed to enjoy advantage or to be unfaithful. So how far can jealousy push a person? Let me give you an example. In St Louis Andrea Murray begged the judge not to jail Bobby Murray for shooting her in the head because he was jealous, sending her into a coma and killing her fetus. Said Andrea, "I don't want to lose my Bobby." So between the shooting and the sentencing Andrea married Bobby.

**Song of Solomon 8:6** For love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame.

Jealousy can drive a person to bitterness, and if it is allowed to grow, bitterness leads to destruction.

The next one, outbursts of wrath, is strong, vengeful anger or indignation. Anger or animosities between contending factions is the usual effect of forming parties or sides. Sadly, we even see mudslinging within churches when the lines are drawn to into sides. What damage and hurt can this do on an individual basis? Let me give you a secular example. Buddhist monk Kong Bunchhoeun, aged 22, was expelled from his temple in Phnom Pen, Cambodia after he was charged with stabbing a student who had complained about his singing at a karaoke bar. Are these things silly or what? But this is the world that we live in. It does not take much.

**Proverbs 27:4** Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?

The next one is selfish ambition. Selfish ambition is an ardent desire for rank, for fame, power. It is a zealous desire to achieve a particular end for personal gain, regardless of its negative consequences to others. Notice how Habakkuk describes the selfishly ambitious.

**Habakkuk 2:4-5** Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith. Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, he is a proud man, and he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, and he is like death, and cannot be satisfied, he gathers to himself all nations and heaps up for himself all peoples.

The next one is backbiting. Backbiting is saying cruel and spiteful things about someone. More specifically, it is slandering or speaking derogatorily about those who are absent. Backbiters proclaim the supposed fault of others publicly. When the target is not there there to defend themselves, they still go ahead and do it publicly.

**Proverbs 10:18-19** Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool. In the multitude of words, sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.

Next we get to whispering. Whispering is spreading confidential and especially derogatory reports. It is gossip. Those who secretly, in a sly manner, by hints and innuendos, put down others or arouse suspicion of them. Whereas backbiting proclaims the supposed fault of others publicly. Whisperers declare them secretly and with great reserve. So these are very dangerous people who give hints of evil in others and communicate the evil report under an injunction of secrecy, knowing that it will be divulged. This class of people proliferates everywhere, and there is scarcely anyone more dangerous to the peace and unity of a group.

**Psalms 101:5** Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I [the Lord] will destroy; the one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I [the Lord] will not endure.

The next one is conceit. Conceit is excessive appreciation of one's own opinion or worth, undue elation, being puffed up, such as would be produced by vain self-confidence. This confidence stems from a feeling of personal eminence in purity and piety. It destroys innocence.

**Proverbs 26:12** Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than him.

And then the final one, tumult. Tumult is the disorderly agitation of a crowd, usually with uproar and confusing voices. It is disorder and confusion arising from the existence of parties or sides.

**Psalms 74:23** Do not forget the voice of Your enemies; the tumult of those who rise up against You increases continually.

So what we see in these evil characteristics is the spirit of the world. And what is sad about this is Paul is telling the Corinthian church, the true church of God, to not have these things in them, because they had them before. And so he is warning them not to let them slip back into the congregation. The apostle Paul says that those who have the Spirit of God do not have the evil spirit of the world.

Let us take a look at the sharp contrast and dramatic excellence of the Spirit of God compared with the spirit of the world. We see an example of this contrast in the record of when Stephen accused of blasphemy. He preaches as a witness of God's truth and then he is martyred.

Now, Stephen was the first listed of the seven Hellenists selected to minister to the widows, and like the apostles, he not only ministered to the needy, but was primarily concerned with the ministry of the Word. And he preached Christ in the Greek speaking synagogues of Jerusalem where he was seized and dragged before the Sanhedrin.

**Acts 6:8-15** And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians,

Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him into the council. They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place in the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us." And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

And we can see what these Jews did over the years following this from Mike [Ford's] sermonette and how they changed the doctrines and changed the doctrines until they were not even the same. From Acts 6:8—7:50, Stephen's defense is the longest discourse in Acts. It is a discerning recitation of Old Testament history, including sections on Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Israel's apostasy. It was cut short when Stephen applied his history lesson to Israel's present rejection of the Messiah. He responded to the charges by turning them on his accusers. They were the ones who were really disobeying God because they rejected His appointed leaders. And these were the people who were seeking to kill Stephen.

**Acts 7:51** You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears!  
You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did so, so do you.

**Acts 7:54-60** When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling

on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

So that is an example to us to forgive one another, no matter what we think they have done, no matter what they said or physically done to us, the least we can do is forgive someone in the church, but we also have to go beyond that and also forgive our enemies. But you see the difference between the attitude of the people and the attitude of a converted individual. The Holy Spirit made all the difference there.

Stephen became the first ultimate witness in the early church and he is the first person after the apostles who is said to have performed wonders and signs. His power was not physical strength or worldly knowledge or influence, but the power of the Holy Spirit.

Why is the Holy Spirit so effective? Well, Paul gives the answer here.

**I Corinthians 2:6-12** However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages of our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written:

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

So, the Spirit is a first installment, it is a deposit, it is a pledge, a down payment or guarantee of more to come. And the Spirit is the enabling mind

and power of God given as a gift to the church and multiplies gifts within the church as enabling benefits among the individual members. So those who live by the Spirit are not characterized by the deeds of the flesh, but by the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Producing good fruit is always a blessing to others, but God does not want us to think negatively. He wants positive, faithful, fruitful thinking that produces good fruit. And by His grace, He has designed into us the blessing to be able to think and understand in a positive way more easily than in a negative way. Dr. Herbert H. Clark, psychologist from Johns Hopkins University, discovered that it takes the average person about 48% longer to understand a sentence using a negative than it does to understand a positive or affirmative sentence.

It shows you right there how we should, even in our writing, be more positive; in our speaking, be more positive with one another. If we want unity, if we want intimacy, and that type of thing with one another, it is just plain easier to be positive. So our cups have to be half-full rather than half-empty, I suppose.

The unchristian characteristics that Paul spells out in II Corinthians 12, which we read earlier, shows a prideful and unthankful attitude. In contrast to II Corinthians 12, Paul encourages us in Colossians 3 how to be a truly Christian church.

**Colossians 3:12-15** Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. [We can look back to Stephen's example.] But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

There is an obvious conflict of spirit between the contentions, jealousies, and outbursts of wrath and so on, and this list of Christian attributes in Colossians 3. We have an individual responsibility to develop the righteous



characteristics of God's church. We cannot claim that we are true Christians if we do not do these things and do not develop these things with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Now, we have to put on tender mercies and kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, so that we may enjoy fellowship with each other in peace and unity—and love is the bond. But the people of the world need to be delivered from this worldly spirit that has a hold on them! They are slaves to sin, Satan, and their own human nature. and the unhappiness, impermanence, and futility of people's lives without God means that humans are in dire need of rescue or deliverance.

So to bring many sons and daughters to glory in His Kingdom, God has designed a master plan for saving mankind at appointed times. The biblical noun salvation describes what God has done, is doing, and will do on behalf of humanity to deliver people from their condition of suffering because of sin.

This divine plan of salvation involves an active process and has a positive result in effect. Salvation provides major benefits from one's union with Christ—and that is key, one's union with Christ. It is a matter of being closely and intimately related to the Savior.

**II Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Not only are the saved in Christ, but Christ is also in those who are saved.

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

So Paul says that his own personal interests and goals no longer direct his life. Rather, Christ, who lives in him, now directs and empowers all that he does, and that should be the same for us. As a "crucified man," he gained

strength to go on living in his physical life by faith in Jesus Christ as he writes these things to us.

As we trust Christ moment by moment, Jesus then works in and through us to give spiritual effectiveness to all that we do. One of the things I think we underestimate the most is the power of the Spirit, the power of the mind of God in us because we do not use it as much as we we should or we could.

Salvation provides new ways to describe our converted lives. The benefits of one's union with Christ can be described in new ways. Consider three distinct categories: We are in a new situation, we have a new self, and we have new steps. Salvation is a three dimensional miracle. It is the greatest miracle that can happen in the life of a converted person. The Day of Pentecost is a day of newness.

Consider the first distinct way that describes the benefit of one's union with Christ: Salvation is a position change that provides a new situation. Now to be saved means first that one's legal status has changed, that one has acquired new rights and responsibilities because of one's union with Christ. So four important concepts depict the new situation brought about by God's saving work: redemption, justification, adoption, and reconciliation. I want to take a moment to refresh us on these concepts, not to spend a lot of time, but just a summary in a sense.

The first one, the concept of redemption. In the Old Testament, redemption is a settlement in which a relative sets a family member free by buying him or her back from bondage through the payment of a ransom. In other words, redemption is a transaction where some item or person is exchanged for payment. The Lord was Israel's redeemer under the Old Covenant, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the church's redeemer under the New Covenant. And eventually everyone will have the opportunity for redemption.

Let me give you a series of scriptures here.

**Mark 10:45** "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Luke uses the term redemption as a general term for salvation.

**Luke 21:28** "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

Then Paul too describes redemption and declares that the price of our redemption was the blood of Christ.

**Ephesians 1:7** In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

And then finally Paul reminds us,

**I Corinthians 6:20** For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

The second concept to depict the new situation is justification. Justification is a reference drawn from the law court. To be justified is to be declared innocent by the presiding judge.

**Isaiah 43:25-26** "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins. Put Me in remembrance; let us contend together; state your case, that you may be acquitted."

So, in this also, to be saved is to enter into a new situation, namely the state of being acquitted that follows the legal verdict of not guilty. Paul makes it clear that previous sinners are declared righteous, not on the basis of their own merits and achievements, that is, works, but rather on the basis of their standing in Christ. And this is, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Justification, like redemption, depends on the shed blood of Christ who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification. The new situation represented by justification is that sinners who are in Christ have been formally pardoned.

The third concept depicting the new situation is that to be saved is to be incorporated or adopted into the Family of God. Another series of scriptures on that.

**Galatians 4:5-7** [T]o redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Now, the process of adoption is linked to the work of Christ's Spirit, whom Paul calls the Spirit of adoption.

**Romans 8:15** For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

The saved are members of God's church and Kingdom. Adoption emphasizes God's grace in salvation, and that it is a family affair.

**Romans 8:16-17** The Spirit Himself [that is, Christ] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Adoption pictures union with Christ in terms of enjoying all the privileges that comes with one's status as a legal child of God as heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

The fourth concept: Paul depicts the new situation of the saved with a term drawn from the area of personal relationships and that is reconciliation. Reconciliation assumes a previous estrangement that has been overcome or healed. All unconverted people are by nature enemies of God because of sin.

**Romans 5:10-11** For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

God is similarly alienated from human beings because of His righteous anger. Again, it is the death of Jesus Christ that averts the divine wrath. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

**II Corinthians 5:18-19** Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Thanks to this reconciling work, one who is in Christ enjoys restored relations with God and, like Abraham, may be called the friend of God. And this is certainly what we want to be called. We want to be God's friend. We do not want to be His enemy, we *have* to be His friend. Our minds have been opened, we have no choice, and thankfully we have a joyful wish to do that.

Consider the second distinct way that describes a benefit of one's union with Christ. Salvation is an interchange that produces a new self. To be in Christ is to undergo inward renewal. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." Salvation names a new personal condition, a new self, as well as a new separated status, that is, separated from the world. So Jesus refers to this inner transformation using the term born again or better yet, literally, born from above. Other similar words are renewal, rebirth, and regeneration.

Now, the need for this inner renewal was perceived by the psalmist in Psalm 51:10. He writes, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." The prophets also foresaw a time of national renewal and spiritual cleansing when God would make a New Covenant by writing His law in people's hearts. Paul conceives of baptism as a sign of rebirth.

**Romans 6:4** Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Over and over again we are told how new our lives are now that we have God's Holy Spirit. Tomorrow does represent a newness of life.

Jesus' resurrection is a sign that the new order has already begun and because believers share in Christ's resurrection, Paul can refer to the new man. Now the new nature designates a new power and a new orientation, which Paul describes as renewal of God's image in humanity defined by Christ. And to be born anew means to be made Christ-like through the renewal of one's inner nature by the Holy Spirit. None of this can be done without the Holy Spirit, with the power and mind of God.

Consider the third distinct way that describes a benefit of one's union with Christ: Salvation is a behavioral change that produces new steps. The unified saved, as a result of their union with Christ by rebirth and the gifts of God's Holy Spirit, are expected to live differently (and that means from the world).

Now there are moral and spiritual implications of rebirth. Not only the natures, but the actions and interpersonal relationships too of the saved are transformed. Our relationships between one another should be far greater, far more intimate, far more important, and far more sacrificing than any other relationships in the world. And this is what we are working, with God's help, to be able to accomplish. It is not that it is God's help so much is that He does it, as long as we are in an agreeable attitude.

Salvation involves a new way of life and goes as far as to call for works as evidence of faith. It is received in faith but expressed in good works. In Galatians 5:25 Paul writes, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit," which means there is action involved. So the saved give evidence of their new natures by walking according to the Spirit and in particular by the quality of their love for one another.

According to Peter's Pentecost sermon, there is not salvation in any other than Jesus Christ. He says there in Acts 4:12, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Jesus is the Savior because His life and work as the Messiah, the Christ, fulfills the three offices of the Prophet who announces salvation, the Priest who affects forgiveness of sins, and the King who rules in our hearts. Salvation then is being in Christ and in Christ we receive a new status, a new

nature, and a new way of life. We live in Christ and Christ lives in us. You do not get more intimate than that. Salvation is past, present, and future. One who is in Christ has been saved, is being saved, and will be saved. That Jesus accomplished salvation is a past act. His death delivered us once for all from the penalty and power of sin.

Yet salvation is also an ongoing and progressive present experience. Christians are sometimes described in the New Testament as those who are being saved. Those who have died with Christ have also been raised with Him and so share His life and His Spirit. Also, though salvation is a past fact, it must not be neglected in the present but rather be held fast and humbly worked out, when the renewing process is complete in the day of Christ.

Salvation is a future hope that one will be spared from the divine wrath and receive eternal life. The eternal life associated with the Kingdom of God is simultaneously present in Christ and future with regard to its glorious manifestation or reality. The plan of salvation reflects the purpose of the will of God the Father who sent His Son to carry it out. And I do not know if there is any more appropriate and excellent summary of these types of things than these scriptures (very familiar and very much loved passage) here in,

**Ephesians 1:3-10** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

The salvation is a result of the concerted action of the Father and the Son by means of the Holy Spirit. It is a gift that results in the blessing of eternal life. Jesus came that we might have abundant life. Whereas sin is life-defying, salvation is life-enhancing. And so Jesus is the source, condition, and power of the new life, and this is the resurrection and the life.

So the book of Revelation brings God's plan of salvation to completion with the Tree of Life first encountered in Genesis 2, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. In Revelation 22 salvation means having a share in this Tree of Life planted in the presence of God, rooted in Christ, and bearing the fruit of the Spirit to the glory of God.

Let us take a closer look at this concept of newness and its practical application in view of the impending judgment that is in store for the world. Peter asks us what kind of people should we be.

**II Peter 3:10-13** But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

The word new here is a value term (and in the rest of the Bible as well), which is rooted in the eternal nature of God. It is indistinguishable, in one way. A characteristic of this eternal newness is that it is where righteousness exists as a permanent essential aspect. It flourishes and is what happens there. Righteousness is part of what makes it new.

We long for completion of the transformation that has already begun. Peter's word "new" in verse 13, is from the Greek word *kainos*. It emphasizes both the radical change that creation will have to undergo and its continuation. It is new, especially regarding freshness. There will be nothing stale about the



new creation. In comparison, the Greek word *neos*, also translated "new" in the New Testament, means new in time or origin. Whereas the word *kainos* means new in nature or in quality. So Peter is talking about the emergence of a universe that would be gloriously renewed.

Although both the Greek words *kainos* and *neos* basically mean new, I want to look at the way each of these words is used in Scripture to demonstrate to you how different they are in their emphasis. Each word reveals different aspects of the concept of this newness. *Kainos* indicates something which is unaccustomed or unused, not new in time. It represents something recent, but its newness relates to its former quality. It is of a different nature from what its old version was.

Now the new things that our calling and election provide are: A new covenant, a new commandment, a new creative act, a new creation, and a new man; that is, a new spiritual and moral character after the pattern of Christ. So here in Ephesians 4, Paul writes,

**Ephesians 4:23-24** Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new [that is *kainos*] man, which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

So Paul calls for we who are "in Christ" to put off our old natures and be renewed in the spirit of our minds and put on the new nature.

Back two chapters to Ephesians 2. I am going to read verses 14 and 15.

**Ephesians 2:14-15** For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Him one new [that is *kainos*] man from the two, thus making peace.

"From the two" meaning from the old Adam and the new Adam.

We are to put on the new man, and as the new man, we serve God as new living sacrifices.

The other Greek word that is usually translated new in the New Testament is the word *neos*, as I mentioned. *Neos* signifies new with respect to time and it also represents something recent. It is also used about the young, especially when comparing something using the word younger.

So *neos* suggests a reproduction of the old in quality or character. *Neos* and *kainos* are sometimes used of the same thing, but there is a difference. Accordingly, the new man in Ephesians 2:15, which is *kainos*, is new, meaning differing in character, but the new man in Colossians 3:10, *neos*, stresses the fact that the believers new experience recently began and is still proceeding.

**Colossians 3:9-10** Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new [that is, *neos*] man who was renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created Him.

This indicates that putting on the new man is a process of conversion. It is an experience that proceeds from bad deeds to good deeds started.

Now notice a few things that relate to the Kingdom of God that are found in the book of Revelation. We receive a new name, a new song will be sung, God will create a new heaven and a new earth, He will create the New Jerusalem, and God the Father, in that spiritual chorus of many spiritual voices proclaims, "Behold, I make all things new."

**Revelation 21:1-5** Now I saw a new [that is, *kainos*] heaven and a new [*kainos*] earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. And then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they will be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there should be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new [*kainos*]."

The new here is freshness, unused, excellent quality. The key to understanding the use of newness in the Bible is an awareness that God is the God of new beginnings, who is continuously doing a new thing.

**Isaiah 48:6-7** From this time forth, I make you hear new things, hidden things which you have not known. They are created now, not long ago.

And this new thing is not simply the displacement of the old. It is something that changes, perfects, and completes the old. The book of Hebrews shows the changes of the old, declaring Christ to be the Mediator of the New Covenant whose atonement confers a new and living way of access to God.

So biblically new is used most often in connection with the regeneration of the individual. Regeneration for the believer is nothing less than a new creation. Newness in this context indicates that a clean break is provided, with the past forgiven and exceeded. This transformation into something new is the essential spiritual reality of our being made a new creation. And although it is in the New Testament that this newness is emphasized most, the Old Testament anticipates it. Ezekiel pictures a time when God will "put a new spirit within them," elsewhere, quoting God's words, "a new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put within you."

Such regeneration is not only an event of future history. At one point God commands Israel to get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit, and this is a command for them to live righteous lives. So this regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the key to understanding the spiritual principles of God's Word, opens our understanding of the plan that God is working out among humanity. The Day of Pentecost symbolizes this major key of spiritual understanding because upon this day God initially sent His Holy Spirit to His church providing Christ's disciples with the power, love, and understanding to carry out the work of the church.

During Jesus' life on earth, the Holy Spirit was *with* the disciples. After the Holy Spirit was given on Pentecost, the spirit was *within* them as it had been in Christ. At this time, the disciples were born from above by the Holy Spirit marking the new beginning of the church of God.

God established His holy days around two major harvests of the year, as you know. A small one in the spring and a larger one in the fall. These harvest seasons typify two spiritual harvests. Pentecost symbolizes the new spiritual harvest and reveals that this is not the only day of salvation. Those whom God calls now are a forerunner group that He specifically selected to be His firstfruits. Pentecost is also the anniversary of God's church and it is the part of God's master plan in which He gives His called-out ones, who have come out of this evil world, His Spirit in order to create in them His holy and perfect character, converting them into His new spiritual creation.

The God of the Bible is the God of new beginnings. He is the one who is perpetually doing a new thing and who makes all things new. His providential and redemptive history of renewal stretches from creation to the Last Great Day and beyond. So God also extends His invitation to the rest of humanity to join this renewal at their appointed time to become a new creation.

Now in the Old Testament, the adjective *chadash* means new, both in the sense of recent or fresh (as the opposite of old) and in the sense of something not previously existing. The sense of recent or fresh (as the opposite of old) appears in Leviticus 23, verse 16 where the Feast of Firstfruits, Pentecost, is commanded.

**Leviticus 23:16** Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord.

This is the only place the word new is used in connection with an offering and it is associated with the firstfruits. We are to put on the new man, and as the new man, we are to serve God as new living sacrifices. Now, I do not have time today to go into the details of that aspect but that is fascinating to me that it is there like that.

One of the reasons why God has called us is so that we may learn to be fruitful Christians. He has not called us merely that we might be free from judgment and enter into His Kingdom, but that the character of Jesus Christ may be reproduced in us.

We are to live in the flesh, but not be of the flesh. We are to live in the world, but not be of the world. We are to do good works to glorify God. And by our example, help to bring many to faith in Him. God is a Father who is raising a large family and He is pleased to have the Family. He is delighted we are members of it, but He is not satisfied only with that. He also wants us to grow up to be a good citizen, spiritually speaking.

He wants productive children and He wants our lives to be fruitful with good works, meaning He does not want us to just sit back, have faith, and do nothing. He is training us now for how well we will work in the Kingdom. And if we are not going to work now, He knows we are not going to work very hard in the Kingdom and He will be giving us a reward accordingly. So if you want to just hold the door open and do nothing else, you may do that in the Kingdom. We do not know how God will work that out, but He will give us something that fits us perfectly and that we will enjoy more than anything that we can imagine. This is the message of,

**Philippians 1:9-11** And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

In praying for the Christians at Philippi Paul asked for three things there:

1) he prays that their love might abound in all knowledge and discernment, 2) he prays that their lives might be lived free of hypocrisy and, 3) he prays, looking forward to the natural result of the first two requests, that they might be filled with the fruits of righteousness.

All good works depend on being filled with God's love, which is a fruit of the Spirit. His love is the pressure, the motive behind good works.

The first thing Paul says the Christian needs in this new life is abounding love. We must be filled with God's love and this must be a love according to knowledge. And I think most people do not understand that love must be according to knowledge. That means there must be a discernment and an

understanding in it. The word used here is a special Greek word, *epignosis*, that refers to advanced spiritual knowledge. In the New Testament the word is applied only to spiritual things—to the knowledge of God, spiritual knowledge, doctrinal knowledge. So it is a knowledge that comes to us through a study of God's Word and an opening of the mind by the Holy Spirit.

The love that is behind good works must also be discerning, as I mentioned. This word has reference to the understanding given by means of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is the discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart and by means of God's Spirit enables us to discern how love should operate.

In addition, the love with which the Christians should be filled must be discriminating. Paul says that we are to discern what is best. The word translated discern in classical Greek refers to testing something or someone. It is the technical word for testing money to determine whether it is counterfeit. So we look at a person or we evaluate a person or we look at their fruit and we determine (and with our children the same way) what is the best way to love them, to discipline them, or to reward them or whatever it might be. Because to just shower gifts on a child is the worst possible thing you can do and think it is love for them. And you know, there are other situations like that. That is a physical application there.

This word for discern here occurs in a political context for the testing of a candidate for office and this is the word used by Paul in Romans 12:2 when he says that Christians are to be renewed by the Holy Spirit, so that they may test and approve what God's will is, His good, pleasing, and perfect will. So we know that we must be motivated and informed by love. Without love we are only clanging cymbals. But this was never intended to be a wishy-washy, undefined sentimental love. It is the love of Christ and therefore it must be a love governed by biblical principles and exercised with righteous judgment.

The second prerequisite of a new fruitful life is that our life must be pure or free of obstructions. The word Paul uses means of untested. This does not mean that we must be perfect because none of us is, but it does mean that our lives must be open before God and before others. There must be no hypocrisy. Our lives are not perfect in this life. We will always have flaws,

but we must not disguise them artificially or any other way. We must be sincere. God's love will not flow through a Christian whose life is a sham. Hypocrisy will stop the flow.

Gladly, however, we may also say that God's love will flow through a Christian as long as he is honest. No matter how marred the vessel, Paul says in II Corinthians 4:7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." Also we look forward to the day when what has begun on earth with all its imperfections will be made perfect in the Kingdom of God. There we will be perfect sterling examples of God's fine workmanship. This leads to the fact that we must be fruitful Christians.

**Philippians 1:11** Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

This does not refer to internal righteousness such as love, joy, peace, and so on. These are the fruit of the Spirit. It refers to what is seen externally and benefits openly.

Now the fruit of righteousness is the fruit that righteousness produces. This is seen in the innumerable acts of kindness and service to which everyone in Jesus Christ is called. We are not only called to bear fruit, we are called to be fruitful. That is, to produce a lot of good fruit. So how is this done in the first place? It must be done by depending on Christ. This is what Jesus was talking about in the last moments He spent with his disciples before His crucifixion.

**John 15:1** "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."

**John 15:4-5** "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

And that word nothing is an absolute, there will be no fruit of righteousness in anyone's life apart from dependence on Christ. So the unconverted person practicing good works must be washed of sin in Christ's blood before he can even begin to produce the truly good works that God the Father has ordained for every each and every one of us who are converted.

Instead of finding happiness in society and the distractions of the wicked, true happiness is found in newness of life. The truth of God is not unpleasant, but it is such a delight that it makes us want more and more, and we want to internalize it as a new way of life. Christ's parable about the vine and the gardener in John 15 emphasizes fruit bearing. We not only need to be joined to Christ in order to be fruitful, we also need to be pruned. And this is actually the way that Jesus' parable begins.

**John 15:2** "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

So the trials that we have in our life, and suffering and things like that are part of that pruning. Our lives have many things in them that are not bearing spiritual fruit. They may be hobbies or habits or relationships, aspects of our occupation. They may even be things that we consider so precious that we think we would die or at least suffer if they were removed.

Yet they should be pruned and God will work to do it. It is true of course, that not all hobbies, habits, or relationships require pruning. God may be using them now in excellent ways. They are not all sinful, they may be what God wants us to do. Nevertheless, each of us holds to things that God will remove, so we may serve Him better. God prunes our idols off. We must make sure that we are not still clinging to them when He does.

For a final scripture, please turn over to Philippians 1.

**Philippians 1:6** Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.



To be among the saved firstfruits is to be united with Christ who is the way and the truth and the life. It is to enjoy a new situation, that is, the truth of our life in Christ and a new self (the life of the Spirit of Christ in us), and a new way of life, the way of righteousness defined by Christ.

We have something fantastic—magnificent—to look forward to. Even though we have already started a new life and all these new things are starting to happen, our future is full of even more new things, wonderful things, eternal things.

And so that is something to keep in mind when we observe of the Day of Pentecost tomorrow. That it is a wonderfully new day in many ways and we can be so very thankful that God has given us His Holy Spirit because it is crucial to our lives from here on out.