

God's Life in Me - The New Birth

- Introduction -

Throughout my years as a Christian, I have encountered many things that were baffling to me about the Christian faith and my own life. Perhaps you too have been confused about such things as: salvation, baptism, speaking in tongues, communion, walking in the Spirit, using spiritual gifts, dealing with temptation, overcoming sin, living by faith, what God wants me to do with my life, His discipline, what it means to be a disciple and so on. Today, I want to share with you a relatively simple outline that will help you understand the basic processes of the Christian life.

- Definitions -

When Christians hear a sermon or read their Bibles they are faced with an array of words which they are not used to hearing and seeing. Most of the time, we don't look up the meaning of these unfamiliar words but instead try to discern what they mean from the other words we are hearing or reading. Familiarize yourselves with them because they will help you understand the scriptures better.

Flesh - the natural body we are born with including the organs and blood.

Discipline - is training expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior.

[Being Jesus' disciple is expected to produce His character in us]

Kingdom - is a form of government. It normally consists of:

- A Person, who is the king.
- A Process, of ruling over the king's subjects through laws.
- A People, who are the king's subjects and in submission to do his will.
- A Place, which is the area over which the king's authority extends.
- A Period of existence, which is the length of time that the king rules.

Man - is a being formed in the image or likeness of God consisting of three parts: spirit, soul and body.

Sin - is disobedience to what God says to do.

Law - is a principle that governs how people behave.

People can choose to obey or not obey any law. However, disobedience to a law usually results in unpleasant consequences. The Bible speaks of all kinds of laws. For example: The Law of God (Ten Commandments), the Law of Moses consisting of 613 laws, the royal law, the Law of the Spirit, parental law, civil law, criminal law and the Law of reaping and sowing. When reading scriptures that contain a reference to law, be sure you find out which law is being talked about or you may become confused. It is not within the scope of today's message to give you definitions of the various types of laws. However, be cautious when people say, "They are not under law." Ask them what they mean by that

statement. For all people are under law of some sort ... if not, they are lawless ... having become a law unto themselves, doing what is right in their own eyes. God destroys these people. Christians are under several different laws. For example, in order to get a driver's license they need to know and comply with over 2000 laws!

Works or deeds - are actions or efforts performed.

The Bible talks about all kinds of works or deeds. For example: works of faith, works of the law, works of righteousness, good works, dead works and works of God. When reading scriptures that contain a reference to works or deeds, be sure you find out which work or deed is being talked about or you might become confused. It is not within the scope of today's message to give you definitions of the various types of works or deeds. However, be cautious when people say, "Not by works." Ask them what they mean by that statement. For all Christians are to do works of faith and were created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Belief (Biblical) - is taking God at His Word recognizing that it is truth, whether it is a promise or an instruction to be followed. Belief by itself will produce nothing. It is like a seed, it won't produce anything until it is planted.

Faith - is belief accompanied by works or deeds. In fact, the Bible says, "*Faith without works (deeds) is dead.*" If the belief is in an instruction from God, faith requires our obedience before anything will happen. In this case it is the opposite of sin, which is disobedience to what God says to do. Since belief is like a seed, faith is making bread out of the seed. It requires action or effort and takes time to complete. This principle is easily seen in the story of Peter and his miraculous catch of fish found in Luke 5:1-11. If Peter had not obeyed Jesus' instructions he would not have caught any fish.

If the belief is in a promise from God it requires faith and patience to inherit the promise. Some faith actions that might be taken concerning His promise are: 1) thanking God for it, 2) fulfilling any requirements attached to it, 3) believing that you have received it and 4) then using it just like you would do with any other inheritance.

Remember ... each seed or promise of God has its own period of gestation ... the time of growth from planting to fruition. Like seeds, God's promises must be planted in good soil in order to produce a crop. Refer to the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-23) and check the condition of your own heart. If your heart is hard ground, Satan will steal the promise from you. If it is shallow ground, the promise will wither under persecution. If it is weedy ground, your occupation with other things will choke it out. If your heart is good ground for seed to grow in, then the promises of God will show signs of coming to fruition (Mark 4:26-29) ... first the blade, second the head and third the mature grain in the head. After that comes the harvest.

An example of the maturation process of God's promises is demonstrated in the story of the Virgin Mary found in Luke 1:26-35. The Word of God, the promise of a child to be born of a virgin, comes to Mary through the angel, Gabriel. Mary believed the Word of God and acted upon it. In other words she had faith that it would come to pass by saying, "may it be done to me

according to your word." At this point she could have doubted that she was pregnant, because she had no evidence that she was. But her faith and patience persevered.

- Then she missed her period ... the blade was showing.
- Then her pregnancy began to show ... the head could be seen.
- Then the labor pains came ... the mature grain in the head is seen.
- The baby was born alive ... the harvest had come.

Remember:

- *Whatever is not of faith is sin. (Romans 14:23)*
- *And without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (He 11:6)*
- *Doing God's works gets rewards from God - it is the Law of Sowing and Reaping ... you reap what you sow – Galatians 6:7.*

- The Primary Text -

So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam (speaking of Jesus Christ) became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly. Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (1 Corinthians 15:45-50)

In this passage of scripture we see natural life contrasted with spiritual life. In fact a person's natural life precedes his spiritual life so that he can better understand the spiritual life. Throughout the scriptures, God uses natural things to explain spiritual truths. Some examples of this are: people's lives of faith, the exodus from Egypt, the tabernacle of God in the midst of His people and the kingdom of God parables to name but a few.

- The Three Parts of Man –



Let's begin by saying that both the natural and the spiritual life are journeys ... they're not one-time events. Both have a beginning point, the actual journey itself and an ending point. In the natural we call the beginning point ... birth, the journey we call life and the ending point, death. In the spiritual life we call the beginning point being born-again. Theologians call it ... justification or being justified ... it is the salvation of the spirit or how the spirit gets saved. Man is a three-part being and is "saved" or "delivered from death" in each of his three parts. However, the processes used to save or deliver each of his three parts, differ. For example, when a person is born-again he doesn't get his new body yet. He just gets a new spirit indwelling him ... the Holy Spirit.

The scriptures point to the fact that Jesus is the author and finisher of our salvation. Even His Hebrew name testifies of it; Yahushua or Joshua means; I AM SALVATION. He is faithful to help us at all the time but we must cooperate or participate with him by using our faith in obeying what he says to do.

Like our natural lives the actual spiritual journey lasts from the time we are born-again until we get our new bodies. Theologians call it ... sanctification/holiness or "being set apart for a holy purpose" ... it is the salvation of the soul. Unlike the born-again experience, sanctification/holiness requires a longer process in order to transform the soul into something acceptable for God's use. The soul consists of mind, will, and emotions. The transformation process occurs by hearing or learning from God, through His Spirit and His Word ... then obeying or applying the things that have been heard or learned. *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)* And like our natural lives the sanctification/holiness process consists of three basic phases: childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

In the spiritual life we call the ending point ... going to heaven or the judgment seat of Christ. Theologians call it ... glorification or being glorified ... it is the salvation of the body. It is the time when Christians get their new bodies and receive their rewards based on their works and deeds. A Christian's glorification is a result of how well they obeyed or applied what God told them or taught them to do during their lives on earth. (Doing God's works gets rewards from God - the Law of Sowing and Reaping ... *you reap what you sow – Galatians 6:7*).

- The Birth Process Has Two Parts -

Conception

Natural birth is a result of the will and grace (unmerited favor) of man.

Spiritual birth is the result of the will and grace (unmerited favor) of God. *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

A baby's conception, in either realm, is never a result of the baby having to do some kind of work. In fact, it cannot perform work or put forth effort because it is not alive. The natural baby simply does not exist and before his spiritual birth a person is already dead ... in trespasses and sin. Therefore, the dead person cannot produce any righteous actions on their own. This is the result of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In other words they passed on sin, which simply means disobedience of what God says to do through their DNA to all men. Some churches refer to this, as original sin or the effects of original sin or the sin nature. Remember, it depends solely upon the grace of either the parents or God to produce a child.

Natural birth occurs at conception when a man plants his seed into the fertile soil of woman's womb. Once there, it produces life.

Spiritual birth occurs at conception when God plants His Word (Jesus - Yahushua - I AM SALVATION) through the preaching of the gospel (God's news - good news - your sins are forgiven in Christ Jesus) into the ear, which leads to the fertile soil of a person's heart.

Remember the parable of the sower! Once there, it produces life.

This was how Jesus was born ... not by the will of man with his disobedient (sinful) DNA but by the will of God with His obedient (faithful) DNA. The conception occurred when the Word of God was given to the Virgin Mary by the angel Gabriel and by faith she believed it.

Live Birth

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see (perceive the existence of) the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter (gain access) into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:1-8)

Natural live birth occurs when a child comes forth from the womb and takes his first breath of air. In other words, the child was alive in one environment or kingdom ... in the womb ... without air and breaks forth into a new environment or kingdom that requires him to breathe air in order to stay alive. After taking his first breath of air he usually expels it by making the sound of crying. Then the baby is cleaned up by washing with water.

Spiritual live birth occurs when a person is baptized (immersed or washed) in water. In other words the person was alive in one environment, the kingdoms of this world, in which he trusted in himself and his own righteousness. Then by faith, he identifies himself with Christ. *"I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

- First an individual recognizes that he has sinned (disobeyed God) and needs to die. It is written, *"The person who sins (disobeys God) will die." (Ezekiel 18:20)* Although Jesus did not sin (disobey God) he by faith, as the Lamb of God, took upon himself all the sins of those who call upon His name ... which is ... Yahshua - I AM Salvation.
- Secondly the individual recognizes that he is buried with Christ in the baptismal water. Although Jesus was in the ground for three days and nights, He had already established the way that righteousness would be fulfilled, when He was baptized (immersed or washed) in the waters of the Jordan River by John The Baptist.
- Third, the individual recognizes that he has been raised from the dead and is empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a new life, dedicated to God.
 - For example: When Jesus was raised from the dead He appeared differently. Mary Magdalene, at the garden tomb and even His uncle Cleopas on the road to Emmaus did not recognize Him ... until he spoke. This righteousness was also incorporated in Jesus' baptism. When he rose up from the water the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove and God spoke from heaven saying, *"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."*
- Finally, the individual further identifies with Christ that having received the Holy Spirit, that God the Father is now saying to him, *"You are My beloved son in whom I am well pleased."* The individual, being empowered by the Holy Spirit, just like Jesus ... will be recognized by his speaking. People will hear a new language for it is written, *"The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."(Luke 6:45)* This may occur in different ways. Throughout the Book of Acts we see various groups of people speaking in languages previously unknown to them in association with their salvation experience, or could be heard praising and exalting God, declaring His mighty works or prophesying.

Natural live birth normally has a gestation period of nine months from conception to live birth.

However, spiritual live birth can happen very quickly. From Scripture it appears that all the requirements for conception through live birth can be met within as little time as one day. For it is written, *"Today is the day of Salvation."*

- The Gospel -

The word "gospel" simply means "good news" or "God's news." The good news is that man's disobediences of God will be forgiven him ... if he will trust in God's method of saving him.

The fullest account of the gospel was expressed by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. This is found in the Book of Acts, chapter 2. Let's take a brief look at what the chapter says.

The gospel consists of three basic parts:

1. A testimony of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God.
 - He was born of a virgin.
 - He went around preaching and teaching the people what God told Him.
 - Then God testified of Him by performing miracles, signs and wonders through Him during His earthly ministry.
 - He was crucified on a cross, though He was innocent.
 - He died and was buried.
 - God raised Him from the dead after three days in the grave.
 - He ascended into heaven.
 - God has made Him both Lord and Savior.
 - He now sits at the right hand of God, judging the living and the dead.

2. The action steps necessary for an individual to participate in God's method of salvation.
 - Repent
 - If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (Romans 10:9-11)
 - Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ

3. The promises that God gives for those who participate in His method of salvation.
 - You will receive the forgiveness of your sins
 - You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.