

So Great Salvation

by J.F. Strombeck

~ 1940 ~

Second Edition

Strombeck Agency, Inc.

Moline Illinois

~ out of print and in the public domain ~

Chapter Ten

A NEW LIFE WITH A NEW NATURE

In salvation GOD does more than deliver man from the power of darkness, redeem him from the penalty of the law and reconcile him unto Himself. All this can be done for man and, though great as it is, it does no more than restore to man that which was lost by Adam's sin. In addition to this GOD makes of man a new and infinitely higher being than Adam ever was. This is accomplished by regeneration, or by being born again.

A man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus came to JESUS one night and said to Him, "**Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him**" (John 3:2).

It is well to consider the type of person Nicodemus was. He is spoken of as a man, a descendant of Adam. As such he possessed Adam's fallen human nature. He was a Jew, one of GOD's chosen people. He was a Pharisee, one of the strictest religious sect of the Jews who were separated unto legal self-righteousness. He was a ruler of the Jews, therefore a member of their council, the Sanhedrin. He was the teacher of Israel. To him others looked as to a guide in matters pertaining to GOD. He was one who had earnestly endeavored to fulfill the requirements of the greatest moral code the world has ever known, the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic ordinances. Evidently in him was found the highest type of manhood possible under the Mosaic law and in fact, any other moral code under which man has lived.

Unquestionably Nicodemus lived up to the light that he had. He constantly

sought more and so, as one who desired to learn better how to live a life pleasing to GOD, he came to JESUS to learn of Him. In Him Nicodemus saw a teacher come direct from GOD.

To understand the exact attitude of Nicodemus to JESUS it is necessary to consider just what any teacher can do for the one who comes to him to learn. All that a teacher can do is instruct. The learning must be by the student himself. The improvement in the life of the student comes from the development of his latent talents. These are stimulated by the teacher but no talents can be contributed by the teacher that are not already in the student. To whatever degree the life of a student can be developed it must necessarily remain the same life as it was at the beginning. In coming to JESUS as to a teacher, Nicodemus hoped to learn how to develop and improve his life so that it would be pleasing to GOD. He had all his life been reading the law as a guide to righteous living, now he came to JESUS in the same attitude.

It was to this attitude of desiring to improve himself that JESUS answered Nicodemus and said; **"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"** (John 3: 3). JESUS' answer to Nicodemus is the answer of the Son of GOD to man's desire to establish his own righteousness and by his own goodness gain entrance into the kingdom of GOD. By this one answer, made to one of the most religious, punctilious, educated, honored and truth-seeking men of his generation, JESUS declared that natural man, however refined, moral and educated he might become, cannot thereby gain entrance into the kingdom of GOD and His heaven. There is not that in man which can be developed into a life acceptable to GOD. How this with one stroke sets aside all present day teaching that JESUS was the greatest teacher the world has ever known and that by following His teachings one can be saved! While the saved person should carefully consider the teachings of JESUS [though some of them were for the Jewish national alone] the unsaved person may all his life strive to follow these teachings and still at the end of his life find heaven's door closed to him. JESUS said, **"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

The word birth, when used literally, always means the coming into existence of a new life. This life always partakes of the nature of the parents. When a wolf, or a sheep, is born there is a new life which has the wolf or sheep nature, as they case may be. When a child is born into the world, a new life comes into existence. This life has a human nature which, as has already been shown (**IV. So Great in View of Sin** *The Outward Expression of Sin*), is sinful. It is shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5). Such a life cannot change its nature. The prophet Jeremiah wrote, **"Can the**

Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23). Nor can it be said that in such a life there is a divine spark that needs but to be stirred to bring that life into fellowship with GOD.

JESUS explained that to be born again is to **"be born of water and of the Spirit"** (John 3:5). This statement is illuminated by a verse in Paul's letter to Titus, **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"** (Titus 3:5). To be **"born of water"** is **"the washing of regeneration."** It is a cleansing of the individual from sin **"with the washing of water by the word"** (Ephesians 5:26). JESUS said to his disciples, **"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you"** (John 15:3).

To be born of the SPIRIT is to be born **"not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:13). It is to be **"born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"** (I Peter 1:23).

By the new birth, GOD becomes FATHER of those so born and they are called His children (I John 3:1) but apart from regeneration there is no fatherhood of GOD for man in this age.

With the new birth there is also a new nature. It is the nature of GOD, the One by Whom life is given. As the life of one born of the flesh is mortal because Adam became mortal, so the life of one born of GOD is eternal because GOD's life is eternal. This eternal life is the present possession of all who are born again **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life"** (John 5:24). One who is born again cannot die. As the old life, born of the flesh, has a sinful nature, so the new life born of GOD has His divine **"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"** (II Peter 1:4) and sinless nature. **"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"** (I John 3:9). This new life is not a development of a "divine spark" in the natural man; it is a new and entirely distinct life from GOD, just as the natural life is from the earthly parents.

JESUS made it very clear to Nicodemus that the new birth and the old natural, or physical, birth are separate and distinct. He said **"That which is**

born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). The two have nothing in common, in fact they are in conflict with each other. **"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit is against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other"** (Galatians 5:17). **"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind (i.e. the mind of natural man) is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"** (Romans 8:5-7). **"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned"** (I Corinthians 2:14).

From the above it is evident that it is impossible by education, culture or reformation to change the natural state of man into the spiritual state of the kingdom of GOD.

The new birth, then, is GOD's answer to that phase or aspect of the sin problem which involves the sinful nature of man. In salvation GOD gives to man through spiritual birth a new sinless nature like unto His Own.

But how about the old sinful nature of those who are saved? What becomes of that? It still lives on in the individual as long as that person lives in the present mortal body. When at death, the spirit of the saved departs from his body then the old nature dies.

It is because the old sinful nature survives that those who have been saved can and do commit sin. This happens when, in the conflict between the carnal and spiritual, the carnal gains the upper hand. GOD's appeal to all who are saved is to **"Mortify (put to death) therefore your members which are upon the earth"** (Colossians 3:5) and **"Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (Romans 6:11).

The New Creation in CHRIST JESUS

The one who is **"born again"** is **"created in Christ Jesus"** (Ephesians 2:10). **"In Christ Jesus neither uncircumcision [i.e., Jews] availeth anything, nor uncircumcision [i.e., Gentiles], but a new creation"** (Galatians 6:15). This creation takes the place of the old creation in Adam. **"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"** (II Corinthians 5:17). This new creation is **"the new man, which after God is created in**

righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

It is not difficult to understand that the angelic host, made of up created beings, belongs to a creation entirely distinct from man. There is even a greater difference between mankind as descended from Adam and the new creation in CHRIST JESUS, for that new creation is even higher than the angels. It is important to recognize that the one who is born again belongs to this higher order of spiritual beings. It is difficult to do so as long as the new life dwells in the present mortal bodies of the old creation in Adam. In them there is still much evidence of the old or first creation.

It was seen that the first creation derived its sinful nature from its federal head Adam. By his sin all became sinners and as the penalty for that sin was death, so death passed upon all men. "**Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world [mankind], and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men"** (Romans 5:12).

The words which are written large over the first creation, that of which Adam is the federal head, are **SIN HATH REIGNED UNTO DEATH**. That condition is unalterable, for GOD had commanded Adam not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and had made death the penalty for disobedience.

This meant death in its fullest significance, physical death, spiritual death and the second death which is the final everlasting separation of the body, soul and spirit from GOD. GOD's commandment had been broken and the penalty could not be avoided.

When the Son of GOD became flesh and came into the world, He dwelt among men of the old creation. But He was not of it. He was not of the seed of Adam but of the seed of the woman. He was conceived by the HOLY GHOST. Therefore, He did not possess Adam's sinful nature. He was full of truth (John 1:14). He was in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), but no sin was in Him.

Then through infinite love, He identified Himself with the first creation and took upon Himself the guilt thereof. He was the LAMB of GOD which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). As a result, He tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). Even with Him, sin assayed to triumph unto death.

But GOD raised Him us, "**having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it"** (Acts 2:24). He arose victorious over death. The Son of GOD? Yes, but also the Son of man. With His resurrection there was a new creation raised by GOD out of the death of

the old. All who are saved are quickened together with CHRIST in this resurrection. "**But God . . . even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus**" (Ephesians 2:4-6).

As the first creation has one man as its federal head, so also has the new creation the man JESUS CHRIST (Romans 5:15). The first creation received its sinful nature from its federal head, Adam. The new creation received its righteous nature from its federal head, the man JESUS CHRIST, for "**by the obedience of One, shall many be made righteous**" (Romans 5:19). *In each case, the nature of the creation depends upon the act of the head. It does not depend upon the acts of those who issue from those heads.*

As the unalterable law of the first is **SIN UNTO DEATH**, so the law of the new is **GRACE REIGNS THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS UNTO ETERNAL LIFE**. This law of the new creation is even more unalterable than that of the first creation: "**For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One JESUS CHRIST**" (Romans 5:17). Since the head cannot be condemned (Romans 6:9-10), the members of the new creation cannot be condemned.

Salvation, then, includes something vastly more than a restoration of man to the original perfect condition in which he was when created. It includes a new eternal life having a divine nature. This new life becomes the immediate possession of the one who believes in JESUS CHRIST. All who are so "**born again**" become a part of the new and infinitely perfect and righteous creation in CHRIST JESUS.

~ end of chapter 10 ~
