

The term "new birth" has become quite common in recent years. What does it mean? The new birth is a Biblical imperative found in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again [new birth]" (John 3.7). Why is this so? Our primary purpose is to explain this all-important spiritual birth according to the Scriptures. The Bible is God's Word, an actual love letter He has written to tell you how you may become a Christian. However, if you have already received the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, we trust this article will give you a fuller understanding concerning your spiritual birth and subsequent spiritual growth.

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CONTENTS

1. The Issue
2. The First Adam
3. Satan
4. The Sinner
5. The Last Adam
6. The Mediator
7. Liberty and Life
8. The Lord Jesus Christ
9. The Principle of Grace
10. Acceptance With God
11. Assurance of Salvation
12. Eternal Security

The Issue

My desire is that you will find this information written to you, personally, and that it will prove to be a helpful explanation of the new birth. Throughout this web page, supporting quotations from the Bible (New Scofield/King James Version) are shown in purple text.

Come along then, and within the next few screens you should know whether or not this is for you. Let's first consider some real-life examples so that you may determine just where you stand in this regard.

TYPICAL EXAMPLES -- My wife, Cornelia, grew up in a denominational church and school system, reaching adulthood without knowing how to become a Christian. As a young woman she began a serious search for the truth, and that by means of studying theological books.

After several years of this futile attempt she was invited to attend a weekly Bible class. It was in her study of the Book, the very Word of God, that Cornelia not only learned how to become Christian, but she accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as her Savior and was born again. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Learn of me... and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28,29).

My experience was at the opposite end of the spectrum. Raised apart from the church or religious education, I attempted to be completely self-sufficient and independent of God. On the basis of that attitude I was brought down to the sad existence of a poor drunkard. It was then, at the age of twenty-seven, that I finally saw myself as sinful and lost, with the grim prospect of facing a holy God in judgment.

All I could do was reach out to God for mercy, and trust Him to accept me as a lost sinner in need of salvation. With that realization I soon received the Lord Jesus as my Savior and was born spiritually, into the family of God. "I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who hath enabled me, in that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Timothy 1:12,13).

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES -- Your experience may be somewhat different from either of the above. Possibly you were raised in a Christian family, and your dear mother or a faithful Sunday School teacher led you to "ask Jesus in your heart" at a very tender age -- but nothing ever came of it.

Or, something did come of it, and you grew up enjoying Sunday School, church, and youth activities, until college or early marriage -- and then it all faded away. The remains are but a bit of cold gray ash within, although there may still be a heart-yearning for God.

Or, at some time you may have been talked into making a "commitment" to Christ by a passing "soul winner", or at a revival meeting in some church or crusade -- but there haven't been any results worth mentioning.

Or, like so many others, you may have been turned off concerning Christianity because of the errant examples of some Christians.

Or -- the most common case of all -- you may have been a good church member for years, and felt that this constituted being a Christian.

On the other hand, in all honesty you may have felt unworthy in yourself ever to be accepted by God, and that has kept you from becoming a Christian.

THE ONE THING -- Dear friend, regardless of your past experience or your present condition, there is but one thing that matters now! If you realize that you are not a born-again Christian, and if you acknowledge that you are a sinner and need the Savior, then God says to you in His Word:

"Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him" (Isaiah 55:6,7).

If you sincerely want to be born again, then this material is written for you.

However, if you feel that you are not yet ready to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the truths set forth here may prepare you to put your trust in the One who is the Truth, the Savior who lovingly says: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 14:6; 8:32).

The First Adam

Out of idle curiosity, or a genuine attempt to find out how to become a Christian, or from some other motivation, you may have picked up the Bible at one time or another and commenced reading at the first chapter of Genesis.

Very likely you managed to cover a few pages, or even chapters, and that was it. All that you read failed to make any sense, and you were quite certain that it didn't relate to your situation anyhow.

You don't mind being totally wrong if it leads to becoming totally right, do you? Let's open the Bible to the first chapter, and consider the 26th verse. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).

This bit of Scripture embodies the truth that has to do with you personally, the key that will explain the new birth.

LOUD AND CLEAR -- Before we settle down to the business of the Bible, let it be said that we are not going into great detail -- you will have the rest of your life for that. You only have time now for the basic essentials.

You may already have been victimized by the wrong practice of many evangelists and preachers. In their well-meaning zeal they often berate and exhort their hearers for an hour or so, and almost as an afterthought tack on a brief summary of the Gospel. Then the bewildered and uninformed sinner is pressured into "going forward" to make the eternal decision to be saved... before he is even aware that he is lost!

To help rectify the above deficiency, our purpose here is to make the truths of salvation crystal clear to you. One has the right to be given sufficient truth whereby to make a clear decision.

GOD'S PURPOSE -- With that ever in mind, let us lock in on this Scripture: "God said, Let us make man in our image." That is precisely what God did. "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul" (1 Corinthians 15:45). God is love, and love must have an object upon which to lavish itself. Hence God made the first man in His image that He might give His love, and in turn receive man's love.

GOD'S IMAGE -- Adam's likeness to God was not a physical image, but one of personhood. God is a Person, man is a person. Man was endowed with the faculties of intellect, emotion, and volition so that God could share with him His life, love, and purpose. Thus they would enjoy fellowship.

God is infinite, uncreated, heavenly, the source of all life; God's first man was finite, created, earthly. God exists on the divine plane; Adam was made on the human plane -- hence they were immeasurably separate in being, but alike in the faculties of personhood.

This "image" verse has to do with you personally, so keep your eye on Adam and you will be halfway to your goal!

God made Adam to be the source, the prototype, the head, the representative man of the entire race. All the human family was to spring from Adam and Eve. In that way the personhood and the human characteristics of Adam would be instilled in the race through the inherited oneness of nature.

The initial phase of God's eternal purpose for mankind was that this representative man would

grow in His moral image, and thereby become increasingly like God. By that means the race that came from Adam would continue in fellowship with God, and God with man.

GOD'S CONDITION -- God was Creator, and Adam created; therefore, God was sovereign, and Adam subject. While Adam had complete liberty to develop in every way in line with God's eternal purpose and for his own eternal benefit, he must remain within the circle of God's beneficent will.

To establish the sphere of His will for Adam, God set forth a single condition. He said to Adam, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16,17).

In order for Adam to develop into a responsible and loving companion to God, not a mere automaton or slave, it was necessary that God give him a choice: to accept God's will -- the way of eternal life; or to reject God's will -- the way of eternal death.

Any deviation from the will of God is lawlessness; it is sin. And, of necessity, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). God is so utterly holy and pure that the result of sin must be eternal banishment from his presence.

At first thought one might be tempted to think that God was extremely harsh and unreasonable with Adam. Death for just one disobedience, and the first one at that? Why, God didn't even say, "That's once!"

But when one realizes something of the only possible relationship between Creator and creature, the unbelievable consequences of creature rebellion allow, there was no choice on God's part but that He to lay down the ultimate penalty for sin. "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, mine Holy One? Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity" (Habakkuk 1:12,13).

Satan

THE TEMPTER -- Enter Satan: enter death! This brilliant celestial being, the highest in God's angelic hierarchy, was cast down from his exalted estate because of the sin of pride. He aspired and conspired to take over the very Throne of God, and to become as God. For this God had to condemn him and his followers to ultimate eternal death in the lake of fire. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer.... How art thou cut down to the ground.... For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.... I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to sheol." "And the devil...was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone..." (Isaiah 14:12-15; Revelation 20:10).

In saying "I will," Satan rebelled against God's will. Satan's failure to conquer God's throne in heaven didn't deter him from attempting to gain control of this world and the human race at its inception. He realized that if he could cause Adam to disobey God, he would thereby win the entire human race at its inception. He realized that if he could cause Adam to disobey God, he would thereby win the entire human race and thus become the god of this world.

Again the reminder to keep your eye on your representative man, because what happened to him happened to you. As you observe Adam, you will learn why you must be born again.

THE TEMPTED - In the face of God's protective command, and His gracious warning of death as the consequence of disobedience, Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And that is exactly what they did.

They chose Satan's way over against the will of God! That was sin. It resulted in spiritual death which cut them off from God, who is the source of life. Years later they died physically-- physical death being the ultimate result of spiritual death.

After he died spiritually, and before he died physically, "Adam begot a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Genesis 5:3). Hence he brought forth the condemned, Satan-bound human race in his own sinful image. Man fell from innocence to enmity toward God!

To see Adam the sinner is to see yourself. You were born into this world possessed of a sinful nature inherited from your fallen source. You were born a sinner, and are therefore spiritually dead. Spiritual death results in separation from God forever--that is hell.

Don't take my word for it, but hear God in His Word. "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). And sin of necessity brought its wages. "Therefore, as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Romans 5:18).

CONDEMNATION COMPOUNDED - Actually, you lie under a dual condemnation: for Adam's sin, and for your own. In Ephesians chapter 2, God speaks of sinners as being "dead in trespasses and sins," and "by nature the children of wrath; having no hope, and without God in the world" (vv. 1,3). "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

A pretty tight spot to be in! Here you are, not only condemned and headed for the judgment of the Great White Throne because you have sinned against God by not trusting Him, but you are equally condemned because you have a sinful nature inherited from Adam.

Since you have been born wrong, and have done wrong, you are spiritually bankrupt. Wrong family (root), and wrong conduct (fruit). "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

The Sinner

QUESTION - You have now reached the half-way mark to the goal of how to become a Christian. "Having no hope, and without God in the world," there is only one way left to go. The way up is down, as you well soon see.

There is but one provision by which to escape the condemned family: a new family! And there is but one provision by which to enter that family: a new birth! If you were to ask, "how can this be?" you would not be the first to pose that question. Now let's find the answer in the Word of God.

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews in Jesus' day, was one of the foremost theological teachers in Judaism at that time. In his need he sought out the Lord Jesus, and received some totally unexpected answers to his questions.

ANSWER - The Lord Jesus said to this seeking sinner, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus then asked, "How can a man be born when he is old" Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (John 3:3,4).

The Lord Jesus reemphasized, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.... Nicodemus answered, and said unto him, How can these things be?" The very same question you may have asked. "Jesus answered, and said unto him, Art thou a teacher in Israel, and knowest not these things?" (John 3:7,9,10).

BLINDNESS - How could such a highly intellectual and theologically astute religious doctor come to such a wrong interpretation of the most important statement he had ever heard or ever would hear? Easy. Wrong family! Hence he was a "blind leader of the blind".

The Apostle Paul, another one-time "blind" leader and teacher of Israel, wrote after he had received his spiritual sight, "If our gospel be hidden it is hidden to them that are lost, in whom the god of this age (Satan) hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3,4).

Satan conquered Adam and the human race by means of deceit, thus he became the arch-usurper the god of this world and the Adamic race. He has blinded the mind of the natural man and has placed enmity in man's heart against God, in order to prevent him from turning to the Savior.

The Bible says that "the carnal (Adamic) mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "There is none righteous, no not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 3:10,11).

By now you may have something pressing quite heavily on your mind, such as, "All the time I have kept my eyes upon Adam there has been nothing in view but condemnation and death. Where is God in all this scene? He doesn't seem to have been able to do anything on my behalf, and Satan seems to have had about everything his own way. Worst of all, God has condemned me for something over which I had no control. It was not my choice to be born of the wrong family!"

GUILTY - Dear friend, I read you. And you are right...in part. It is true that you could not help being condemned in Adam, and therefore a lost sinner by nature. But it is also true that you are a condemned sinner by your own personal choice--in thought, word, and deed.

Is it not true that you have "broken every commandment in the Book"? Have you even kept the first one? "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Matthew 22:37,38; James 2:10).

Oh, you have earned your condemnation before God all right, and that because of your self-centered heart and will. God says that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

Like Satan you have said, "I will" in the face of God's will to the contrary. What is more, as the

sinful clay you have no right to question the holy, sovereign Potter. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Romans 9:20).

When it comes to being a lost sinner, you are a self-made person.

It is best to admit to God that He is right after all, and that you are wrong, wrong, wrong. And the good news is that God has been very much on the scene all the time, and that on your behalf!

"Satan is never so completely defeated as in his apparent victories!"

The Last Adam

Enter the Last Adam: enter Life! Did you know that God has two Adams, two contrasting representative men as heads of two completely different streams of humanity? "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving spirit" (1Corinthians 15:45). Note the disparity between these two sources: "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:47).

THE FALLEN ADAM - The first man brought forth the sinful, earthly race by natural generation. The Second Man is bringing forth the righteous, heavenly race by supernatural regeneration. The wrong family is entered by physical birth; the right family is entered by the "new birth".

Watch carefully now, and see what God has done for you. Having kept your eye on the first Adam long enough, you can now keep your eyes on the Last Adam for all eternity. See how God has been silently working in order to consummate His original purpose of making man in His image.

THE RISEN ADAM - "God...hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:1-3).

The first Adam ceased to reflect the image of God because he rebelled and turned against God's will. The Last Adam maintained God's image because He confessed, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

God in mercy has given another Adam through whom He means to carry out His original purpose for you. He is no less than God the Son, and hence the express image of God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Actually, the failure of the first Adam set the scene for the triumph of the Last Adam.

The Lord Jesus is God's Last Adam because there would be no need for another. At the Cross He appeared to be a hopeless failure--but, "except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

SINLESS BIRTH - See how justly and perfectly God has wrought the plan of salvation. Your condemnation came by human birth, and your Redeemer came also by human birth. It has been said:

"The manner of the birth of Christ, termed the virgin birth, might better be defined as the virgin

conception, for the birth itself was normal enough once He was conceived by the Holy Spirit."

The angel announced to the virgin Mary, "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.... The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:31,35).

That was the manner by which the Son of God entered the human race. The difference was that He as God was born sinless, while we were born "dead in trespasses and sins." And, during His life on earth, He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Remember now, in order for God to justly and perfectly replace the sinful first Adam, His Last Adam had to succeed where the first Adam failed. He had to remain faithful to God under the same circumstances and limitations in which the first man brought ruin. Further, He had to be tempted to do the same thing, in the same way, by the same person, as was the first Adam.

RE-ENTER SATAN - In Luke 4 we see that the Holy Spirit led the Lord Jesus into the desert, where He fasted for forty days. When the Last Adam's hunger was acute, Satan tried to tempt Him to eat--the very temptation by which he had conquered the first Adam.

Satan launched his attack on the Last Adam, knowing that if he could get Him to step outside God's will and go His own way, he would thereby conquer the last representative Man. He would then have all and be as God.

Keep in mind that the Lord Jesus was not facing this temptation for His own sake, but for yours! He was doing it as your Substitute in order that He might become your Savior.

Satan cast his first fiery dart at the Lord Jesus by saying, "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone, that it be made bread" (Luke 4:3). Being God, the Lord Jesus could have done it.

Famished as He was, He just parried the deadly dart with Scripture: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). As the Last Adam, the Lord Jesus was in glad subjection to His Father, and He refused to do anything contrary to God's will for Him. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:9).

When food failed, Satan projected his power play. Taking the Lord onto a high mountain, he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Then he said to Him, "All this authority will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it" (Luke 4:6).

Here, Satan had the effrontery to offer the world to the very One whom God has "appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:2). Notice that the Lord Jesus did not challenge Satan's claim nor question his offer, but by His silence acknowledged that Satan is indeed the god of this present world.

Satan finally revealed his all-consuming lust for the ultimate. "If thou, therefore, will worship me, all shall be thine" (Luke 4:7). Think of it! Satan, the implacable foe of the Most High God, seeking to bribe God the Son into worshipping the usurper. Here was his boldest bid to become as God.

But the Last Adam again effortlessly cut down the Enemy with the sword of the Lord: "Get thee

behind Me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shall worship the Lord, they God, and Him only shall thou serve" (Luke 4:8).

The Mediator

Enter the Mediator: enter justice! Now we come to another wonderful aspect of God's work on your behalf. He sent His beloved Son from heaven, not only to be your Last Adam, but to be the Mediator between Himself and you. A Mediator is one who stands between two parties to reconcile their differences when there is a breach between them. And the gulf between you and God is considerable.

REQUIREMENTS - The Lord Jesus is God's only Mediator. And He is the only possible mediator for you. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

A mediator must be one who is accepted and trusted by both parties involved. God said of the Lord Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). He asks you to receive His Son. You enter into your part of the mediation by accepting and trusting God's Mediator.

In order to be the Mediator between God and man, the Lord Jesus had to partake of both God's nature and man's nature. That is mediation--He entered into the very nature of both parties involved! Are you not beginning to be gripped by the marvel of all this?

The Lord Jesus always was God; He had God's nature from all eternity. By being born of the virgin Mary, He took upon Himself the nature of man. He is referred to in the Scriptures as both "Son of God" and "Son of man".

PAID IN FULL - Observe what else the Word of God says of Him: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant (the Last Adam), and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:6-8).

Our Lord willingly shed His life-blood on the Cross, dying the most agonizing and shameful criminal death for you. Yes, the Lamb of God was sacrificed in order to pay your penalty. "Without shedding of blood is no remission (forgiveness)" (Hebrews 9:22).

Your blessed Substitute "made peace through the blood of his cross.... And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his (God's) sight" (Colossians 1:20-22).

Further, as Mediator, the Lord Jesus must equally represent both God and man. Think of that! He stood between the holy God and the sinful human race. He had to be one who would satisfy every claim of God upon man, and every claim of man upon God. Being your Creator, God has considerable claim upon you, does He not?

STAKE YOUR CLAIM! - There is but one legitimate claim that you have upon God, and that is that you are condemned and there is absolutely nothing you can do to alter the fact. Although

you had nothing to do with your birth into the wrong family, of your own volition you established your condemnation.

No matter how much you try to alter your condition, or how good you may attempt to be, you are still drawing from the wrong source, one that is totally unacceptable to God. So the claim you have upon Him is, "God, I can do nothing about my spiritual position, or condition. You will have to undertake for me."

And He has already done that which is required for your personal case! He sent His Son to take your place in the death that sin required--the Lord Jesus took upon Him that death and paid the penalty for you.

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, who raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Peter 1:18-21).

Liberty and Life

All that you have considered thus far adds up to this: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians. 15:22). Your only hope is to be freed from eternal death in Adam, and to be born again so that you have eternal life in Christ.

FROM BAD TO GOOD - When you are able to face up to the bad news, and acknowledge that Satan has you hopelessly bound in guilt, condemnation, and death; it is then, and not until then, that God comes to your rescue and enables you to embrace the Gospel, the good news.

And was there ever such good news? "Forasmuch, then, as the children (of Adam) are partakers of flesh and blood, he (the Last Adam) also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews. 2:14,15).

THE DIVINE OFFER - God has always taken the initiative. He made the first and every other move toward you, while all your moves have been away from Him. But the blessed "Hound of Heaven" has finally overtaken you.

As one has so well put it, "Mulling over this solitary journey afterward, I had a notion that somehow, besides questing, I was being pursued. Footsteps padding behind me; a following shadow, a Hound of Heaven, so near that I could feel the warm breath on my neck.

"I know I was making for somewhere, some place of light; seeking some ultimate fulfillment of which another reborn me would be extricated from the existing husk of a fleshly egotistic me, like a butterfly from a chrysalis.

"I was also in flight. Being chased; the pursuing and the pursuit, the quest and the flight, merging the last into one single immanence of luminosity."

Just as the Father embraced his prodigal son, so God's love receives you "as is" . "God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans

5:8). God loves us the way we are, but He loves us too much to leave us that way.

Could the good news of the Gospel be more explicit? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "Whosoever" includes you: you can thank God for that! You escape everlasting death and enter into everlasting life by believing on the Son. Born to die, you are reborn to live. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life" (John 3:36).

What a relief! God laid all your sins upon His perfect Son when He was on the Cross of Calvary. The Lord Jesus took all your sin into death, thereby paying for your justly-earned penalty. Since He Himself had not sin, He was free to come out from under the paid penalty and rise from the dead. He "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

FREELY FORGIVEN - Now God can justly say to you, "Full payment has been made. Receive My beloved Son as your personal payment, and you will be free from the first Adam and born again into the Last Adam."

Yes, Jesus paid it all! "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ... For he hath made him (Jesus), who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians. 5:18,21).

Here is a word from God to better enable you to close in on the subject at hand. He says to you, in love, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Enough! No works, no changing; He just asks you to trust Him as you are: an ungodly sinner. Being a sinful child of Adam, you fully qualify for God's gift of His Son. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "For Christ also hath once suffered for (your) sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Peter 3:18).

THIS IS IT! - You have earned your wages, but God offers you His free Gift before you have to collect them. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Romans 6:23). If, right now, you want to receive the Savior, there are but two words remaining!

"REPENT" - How to be born again consists of "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). Repentance means to turn about, to change one's mind. God, the Creator of the universe, asks you to turn from your way and choose His way. And He has personally paid your (Adamic) penalty on the Cross so that you are legally free to make the right choice. "God... commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

Now you can freely pray to Him, "O God, I want You to be my heavenly Father, and I choose to go Your way."

"BELIEVE" - "Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." When you repent and turn to God as your Father, there is no longer any question about trusting God the Son as your Savior. On the basis of what you know of your spiritual need, and what you have learned about Christ's provision, you

may now say to Him, "Lord Jesus, I thank you from my heart for dying for my sins, and I now receive You as my own Savior."

That, dear friend, is how to become a born-again Christian.

The Lord Jesus Christ

WHAT HAPPENED? - As a Christian, it is important for you to know something of what happens to you when you reject the first Adam and accept the Last Adam. You know you have become a Christian, not on the basis of what you feel or don't feel, but upon Whom you have believed and therefore have received. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

PERSONAL - As Adam brought death by your natural birth, so the Lord Jesus brings life by your spiritual birth. When you accept the Savior, you not only receive what He did for you on the Cross, but you receive the One who did it. By His Holy Spirit, He comes into your spirit to be your Christian life. "Christ, who is our life" (Colossians 3:4).

When you place your trust in the Lord Jesus, God removes you from the fallen Adam family by the cutting-off death of the Cross, and He spiritually re-creates you as a member of the new heavenly race that springs from the Last Adam. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

ONENESS - As you were one with Adam by nature, you became one with the Lord Jesus by a new nature. God positions you in His Son by means of a spiritual birth, and He places His Son's very nature within your spirit so that you are now His child. Believing, we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

At the moment of your new birth, the Lord Jesus enters your spirit by means of God the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of Christ. In that way you are in living and eternal union with God the Son. "I (Christ) will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter (the Holy Spirit), that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth.... At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:16,17,20).

LIFE HIMSELF - "Believing on God is really receiving what God gives." Becoming a born-again Christian is receiving and being indwelt by a Person. It is not a matter of feeling, but of scriptural fact. It is not making a commitment, or deciding to follow Him, or anything else. God gives you eternal life by giving you His Son who is life eternal. The Lord Jesus said, "I am...the life" (John 14:6).

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath no life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:11-13).

SERVANT SATAN - Now you can see that Satan didn't ruin or alter God's original plan, after all. As a matter of fact, God used him to bring about His purpose for you. By the fallen Adam, Satan brought you under condemnation. But the Spirit-given realization of your lost condition led you to conviction of sin and to the Savior. "Satan is working within the limits of the eternal plan of God." And that in spite of the fact that He fell by originally exceeding those limits.

GROWTH - What is God's eternal purpose for you? Remember? "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26). And the Lord Jesus is the "express image of his (God's) person" (Hebrews 1:3). Hence, by means of your new birth you were re-created in the image of God.

As you grow in your new life, you will grow in the expression of that image. That is what the Christian life is all about--becoming more and more like your Lord. Paul said of his converts, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19).

As a Christian, God will be working out His eternal purpose for you, and slowly developing you into His likeness. Like the Father, and like the Son! "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:28,29).

You have begun a wonderful new life now, and it will continue throughout Eternity. All the while, you will be getting to know the Lord Jesus more fully; and by Him you will increasingly know and love your heavenly Father. "For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

HEIR OF GOD - Keep in mind, the Lord Jesus is your very life now, and He will be forever. All that He is, He is for you. All that He has, He will give to you--and that will require all eternity! "For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.... Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." "If children, then heirs--heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Galatians 3:26; 4:7; Romans 8:17).

Let us reverently listen to a portion of the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ just before He went to the Cross:

"Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent....

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one.... Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:1-3; 22,24).

The Principle of Grace

BORN BY GRACE - As a new Christian you are able to understand that you were born again on the principle of grace--the unearned, free gift of God. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8).

CONFORMED BY GRACE - As a new Christian it is important that you realize, also, that God saved you in order to conform you to the image of His Son. The Lord Jesus is the express image of God, and it is through Him that God realizes His original purpose: "Let us make man in our

image."

LIVE BY GRACE - As a new Christian, moreover, you are to understand that your new life is to be lived on the same principle as your new birth--that of grace. "As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Colossians 2:6).

God created, God gave, God works, "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Your Father's good pleasure is that you may become like His beloved Son.

As a babe in Christ you are aware of new life and strength within, and your heart is filled with love for the Lord Jesus. You will become active in church, Bible study, Scripture memorization, and no doubt seek to win your unsaved relatives and friends to the Savior. All good, and beneficial.

WORKS VS. GRACE - In time, however--it may be a few months or a number of years--you may begin to falter in all of these areas. Your love for the Lord Jesus cools, and elements of your old life begin to reassert themselves.

Struggle as you may to regain your spiritual balance, you will only seem to fail the more. For you it becomes, "When I would do good, evil is present with me.... Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:21, 24).

By means of your struggle and failure to live the Christian life, the Lord Jesus is teaching you the indispensable grace principle of "not I, but Christ" (Galatians 2:20). During this downward path you will finally learn that you cannot live the Christian life in your own strength, nor even with the Lord's help.

THE GRACIOUS VINE - The Lord Jesus expressed this principle in John 15:5: "I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."

Your part, as a branch in the Vine, is to rest in Him, depend upon Him, and fellowship with Him. You are joined to the Vine by nature, and His life will flow in and through you, "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:11).

You will find it a great revelation--and relief--in the midst of your failure, to hear these words, "Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place" (2 Corinthians 2:14). You do not triumph by means of your own strength and strategy; it is your Father who gives you life and growth in His Son.

Regeneration by grace; growth by grace--that is the principle of the Christian life. Indeed, the Lord Jesus is your Life Principle. "Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

WALK BY GRACE - Slowly and painfully you will learn to be dependent upon your heavenly Father. He has ordained and laid out His plan for your life, and as you grow spiritually you will be walking in the path He has chosen for you. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"

(Ephesians 2:10).

SERVE BY GRACE - You are going to learn that your service is also according to the principle of grace: regeneration by grace, growth by grace, service by grace.

Your Father has promised to provide you with all that you will need for whatever He calls you to do. There will be enough for you, and for others, also. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

GRACE WORKS! - The fact that the Christian life and service are by grace does not mean that you flop down and wait for Him to work apart from you.

The growing Christian is a very active individual; he becomes the willing instrument of God's blessed will. In his measure he can say, with Paul, "His grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

"God works, not with what He finds, but with what He brings."

Acceptance with God

WHY DOWN? We need to pause here and consider just why the growing Christian is taken down into defeat and despair in order to be brought up into maturity and fruitfulness. The hard fact is that the growing believer's formative years are predominantly backward and downward, rather than forward and upward. There is far more of Romans Seven (defeat) than there is of Romans Eight (victory).

It must be understood why your head, heart, and hope extend far in advance of your Christian course, while your actual experience struggles along, years in arrears. Now is the time for you to discover why it is that there is so much more fear, failure, and frustration than love, joy, and peace during your early spiritual development.

The main reason for this is that your Father has allowed your old sinful nature to remain within, co-existent with your new righteous nature. It is by this means that God gives you the constant choice: to abide in your old nature and be Adam-like, or to abide in your new nature and become Christ-like.

THE WAY UP IS DOWN! - Your Father first teaches you about your old sinful self, before you are taught about your new righteous self. The greater part of your early training consists of learning to recognize your sinful Adamic nature for what it is, totally self-centered and at enmity with God!

Mercifully, the need fostered by this prolonged discovery provides the motivation and heart-hunger for knowing your new Source of life, the Lord Jesus. Your new nature is the direct opposite of the old; it loves God and His will.

The sin and bondage spawned by your old nature motivate you to depend upon the Lord Jesus, to love Him, and to know Him. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true

God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." "That I may know him" (John 17:3; Philippians 3:10).

FOUNDATIONAL FACTS - In order for you to come through the extended disclosure of your sin nature strong and sure, rather than baffled and beaten, you must know the solidity of your spiritual foundation.

When you become acutely aware of the sin within, and its evil manifestations in your daily walk and relationships, you may be tempted to wonder whether or not you are a Christian, after all. Hence you need to know the strength of the foundation upon which you are to live and grow.

ACCEPTANCE BY GRACE - The first aspect that we are to consider is that of acceptance--your acceptance with God in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Like everything else in your Christian life, your acceptance by God is of grace. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, through which he hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:5, 6).

Could anything be more complete and eternal? To the extent that the Father accepts His beloved Son, He accepts you in Him. You can forever thank Him that your acceptance does not depend upon what you are in yourself!

POSITION VS. CONDITION - If you judge God's attitude toward you according to your day today conditions, you are never going to be absolutely sure that He fully accepts you, if at all. When everything is going well and you are happy in the Lord you are likely to conclude, "I am pleasing to God, therefore He loves me and accepts me."

But when He has to take you down into failure, or through trial, or into the desert--as an important part of your spiritual development--then you are apt to feel, "I must be displeasing to God; He doesn't seem to love me or accept me any longer."

With God, position is everything when it comes to your acceptance in His Son, and He wants that to be everything in your estimation. Of course, God is concerned about your present state, and He expects you to be, also. But your acceptance is not based upon your condition.

SATAN SACKED - Your acceptance by God will often be denied by Satan. He will accuse you concerning sin in your life. He will insist that God cannot possibly accept anyone in your condition. It is then that you can especially rest in the Lord Jesus, who is your full acceptance before God and your shield against the devil's dart of doubt. "For your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

God has positioned you in Christ. As the Holy Spirit develops Christ's life within you, you will be increasingly conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus, Satan and all his wiles notwithstanding. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,

are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

TRI-ACCEPTANCE - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are working on

your behalf in the oneness of the Godhead for their eternal purpose: "Let us make (this) man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).

In the light of these fortifying truths, you need never heed Satan's lies! "If (since) God be for us, who can be against us?... Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" (Romans 8:31, 33). Certainly not Satan!

"Not a hair of the child of God can fall without God's permission. Satan is but the unintentional instrument to accomplish God's will; he can do no more than he is allowed to do. If trials come as a host against us, we know that the Almighty is between us and them. They will but work out for us our Father's own purposes of love."

Assurance of Salvation

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER - The second aspect of your spiritual foundation is the assurance of salvation. This is the "know-so" conviction that you are a Christian. "For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

To the extent that your assurance of salvation wavers, your Christian experience will be crippled. It is much the same in the realm of the human family. A child may hear a rumor that he was adopted, and may begin to doubt that his parents are his real father and mother.

He thereby loses his "assurance"; he is no longer sure of his position in the family. This can have a devastating effect upon a child. How strengthening and assuring it is when one is sure of his parentage!

It is similar in the Christian life. Your unshakable assurance as to spiritual parentage comes from the Word of God. Your new position is as sure and unchangeable as the eternal Scriptures upon which it is founded. Your actual condition fluctuates from time to time--there is both retrogression and progression. Hence your position is the only ground for assurance of your salvation.

FAMILY POSITION - Ever keep in mind the difference between position and condition. Let's say there is a certain boy whose dad's name is Carloni, and whose mom's maiden name was Valentino. When we know his parentage, we know that this boy is Italian by family position and nature.

Because of his position by birth, we know that when this boy grows up he is going to be Italian in his condition, in his characteristics. His condition will reflect his position. He is born into an unchangeable position, and his is growing in his changeable condition--but both are Italian.

Spiritual birth has to do with family position, and not with experiences. Your new birth may have a great effect upon your condition. You may be filled with love, joy, peace--that is the result of your position. These and other aspects of your condition will ebb and flow.

There will be growth all during your life, but your family position will never change one iota. And it is upon your position in Christ that your assurance of salvation is established.

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may

know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

FOUNDATIONAL SHIFT - It is usually in this area of assurance that you make your first major mistake in your Christian life. After you enter your spiritual position by faith, there is a great change in your condition--at least there should be! Many of the old sins and habits drop away, and you may become a joyous and outgoing Christian. Your life is flooded with that first love and enthusiasm.

As a babe in Christ you are keenly aware of this transformation. It is so perceptible and wonderful that you are very likely to shift your assurance from your position to your condition. You feel so saved, and you act so saved, that you may say to yourself, "I know that I am a Christian; look at me, listen to me!"

You are now assured of your salvation because you feel saved. But see what this leads to. One morning, comes the dawn. On this particular day upon awakening you realize that you don't look very saved, you don't sound very saved, and you no longer feel very saved. All day long everything goes wrong, and by nightfall you find yourself at the end of your assurance.

Your conclusion may well be that since your condition is so bad, you just may not be a Christian. At any rate, you make up your mind to regain your assurance. The next day you strive to look and to sound and to feel saved. In short, you begin to struggle in order to maintain your assurance.

But because you are now centering your faith upon yourself and your condition, there is nothing but failure compounded. Your positional relationship with God has not changed in the least, and never will--but your assurance of it has. It may be by this, or a similar experience, that God will teach you that your new Christian life, and your assurance of that life, have their source and foundation in your position. It is all of grace!

"Who (God) hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:9).

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT - Another factor concerning your assurance of salvation is "the witness of the Spirit." "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

So many have the tendency to hanker for assurance in the realm of feelings. "Some anxious soul says, 'If I had the witness of the Spirit I should be happy and at rest; but, alas! I have not that witness.' My friend, you are looking in the wrong place for the Spirit's witness. You must not look within.

"The witness of the Spirit of Truth is not an inward feeling of consciousness of pardon; it is a witness recorded in the imperishable words of Holy Scripture. The witness of the Spirit is not a vague uncertainty or inward consciousness; it is a written testimony that lies plain and clear on the pages of Scripture.

"What is the witness? It is this: 'Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more' (Hebrews 8:12). Every believer is entitled to know that the question of his sins is divinely and eternally settled."--C.A. Coates

When the Holy Spirit, the Author of the Bible, speaks to your heart, He does it by means of that Word. As you study the Scriptures concerning your position in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of Christ gives you a deep assurance within your spirit, beyond the realm of feelings, which cannot be altered or gainsaid.

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.... And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.... These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:10-13).

Eternal Security

UNCONDITIONAL - The third and final aspect of your spiritual foundation to be considered here is eternal security. Just as your acceptance with God is by grace, so your eternal security is by grace.

You will inevitably encounter those who vehemently oppose the truth of eternal security. Those opponents insist upon some form of works in order to remain saved. But the God of all grace, the One who saves and secures, says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Standing upon your acceptance by God, and thereby resting in your assurance of salvation, there is very little that need be said about the obvious conclusion: you are unconditionally, eternally secure in the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever" (Jude 24,25). It isn't that you don't fall in some measure daily in your condition, but that you cannot fall from your eternal position. One may fall on the deck, but never off the ship!

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD - The master key to your eternal security is the fact that your Father is the sovereign God of the universe. He has chosen you! He has made you His child! "According as he hath chosen us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world...having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:4,5).

You have already seen that your sovereign Father accepts you in His Son, and that He is working out His eternal purpose and will concerning you. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, through which he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.... In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:6,11).

THE JUSTICE OF GOD - In a day of flagrant injustice, it will hearten you to know that your security is based squarely upon the justice of God. "To declare...his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (Romans 3:26; 1 Peter 3:18).

Payment God cannot twice demand; First at my bleeding Surety's hand, And then at mine.

THE LOVE OF GOD - Another factor in your eternal security is God's love for you. Your Father loves you as He loves His Son, because in Him you are also His son. Nothing can separate the Lord Jesus from His Father, and in Him nothing can separate you from your Father.

"What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Romans 8:35,38,39).

THE POWER OF GOD - further, you are an heir of God. Your inheritance is kept for you while you are kept by the power of God.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

THE PROMISES OF GOD - As if this overwhelming evidence concerning your eternal security were not enough, God has given many promises that He will keep you. Let us look at just two of them in closing.

The Lord Jesus gives you a dual promise: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). You have come to him as your Savior, and he has not rejected you but rather received you in eternal love. Having come to Him and been saved by His marvelous grace, He has promised never to cast you out!

When Satan approaches you in the midst of your weakness and immaturity and charges that God has forsaken you, because of your sinful condition, it is then that your Father's promise shines upon you: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). "God said it, I believe it, and that settles it!"

Finally, consider this encouraging word by the late Dr. L.S. Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary: "Could it be possible that God would so love an individual as to give His Son to die for him, and still love him to the extent of following him with the pleadings and drawings of His grace until He has won that soul into His own family and created him anew by the impartation of His own divine nature, and then be careless as to what becomes of the one He has thus given His all to procure?" (Salvation, p. 119)

It is upon this sure foundation of acceptance, assurance, and eternal security--amid the exigencies and ecstasies of the Christian life--that you will "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).