

Congregational handout; outline sermon text on following pages
Sermon Notes & References

“Born Again – The Effect”
2 Corinthians 5:17

August 5, 2012

A. Our Text, 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV): **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

B. A Spiritual Journey

1. From the Beginning^A

2. Our Natural Spiritual State

a. the natural man^B

b. the old man or self^C

c. the flesh (but take care!)^D

d. carnal or fleshly^E

3. Our New Spiritual State

a. the new man or self^F

b. spiritual^G

c. the spirit or mind^H

d. a new creation or creature (today’s text)

4. These Two States Coexist^I

C. The Power of the New Creation

1. The Purpose for Believers^J

2. In Jesus: the Promise is Fulfilled^K

D. Conclusion^L – which state is most desirable for me?

^A Genesis 2:16-17, 3:6, 3:8

^B 1 Corinthians 2:14

^C Colossians 3:9

^D Hebrews 5:7, Mark 14:38, 2 Corinthians 10:3-4

^E 1 Corinthians 3:3, Romans 8:7

^F Colossians 3:9-10

^G 1 Corinthians 2:14-15

^H Ephesians 4:22-24

^I 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, Romans 7:15-25, 6:14

^J Romans 7:12, 14; Deuteronomy 30:6, Ezekiel 11:19-20

^K John 8:31-36, Philippians 2:13, Ephesians 2:10, 1 John 2:29, 3:9

^L Colossians 3:1-2

A. Introduction

1. Our Text – **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)
 - a. 2 weeks ago we spoke from John 3 on being “**Born Again - the Means**”
 - (A) there we found that regeneration – that is the theological word used to refer to the new birth – we found that being born again
 - (B) is the creative work of God alone
 - (C) it is subjectively realized – that is, it is experienced by a person – by means of conversion, through a person coming to God in repentant faith
 - (1) recognizing and sorrowful for his or her sin
 - (2) trusting in God in His mercy for salvation in Jesus Christ
 - b. we also made very brief mention that being born again
 - (A) although it involves a person’s innermost being
 - (B) must have an outward effect
 - (C) that if not, then the unbelieving world is correct in casting scorn and reproach upon those claiming to be born-again Christians
 - (D) as one Puritan put it, ‘**If a man is converted, even his dog should know it!**’—{2}.
 - c. that is what our text for today is describing
 - (A) **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)
 - (B) the bumper sticker, ‘**Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.**’ is true as far as it goes, but it is only one side of the truth of salvation
 - (C) because God effects a new creation in the innermost being of the Christian; and God never does anything without a purpose
 - (D) ‘**why then,**’ we Christians may often find our asking ourselves, ‘**if that is the case, why does it so often seem that all things are not new in my life? ... why do so many of the old sins and habits still linger on to beset and to distress me?**’

- (E) hopefully this morning we shall find an answer to this frustration from the Scriptures as we examine this subject together
- d. now before describing of the aspects of the effect of the new birth, it may help our understanding if we take ...

B. A Spiritual Journey

1. From the Beginning

- a. As Maria teaches the children in 'The Sound of Music'^{3}.

Let's start at the very beginning

A very good place to start

When you read you begin with A-B-C

When you sing you begin with do-re-mi

- b. and, when you study the Bible, you begin with Genesis
- c. Genesis 2:16-17, 'The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."'
- d. now some, because the Hebrew translates literally as 'dying, you will die' or 'to die, you will die' have tried to interpret this as meaning that then Adam would only begin to die
- e. but that misunderstands the meaning of the Hebrew idiom, which is used to express with great forcefulness the words of the Speaker: '... most assuredly, I say, in that day you shall die ...'
- f. then, in Genesis 3:6, 'When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.'
- (A) in that moment, they both died
- (B) not in physical death, to be sure, but in spiritual death
- (C) for physical death, the separation of a person's body from life
- (D) is but a picture of the real death, of spiritual death, the separation of a person's spirit from the Living God
- (E) that separation became evident in Genesis 3:8, 'They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in

the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.'

- g. ever since, all those descended from Adam, and that is all of us, have been born spiritually dead, separated from God
- h. and the Bible uses a number of terms to describe this, ...

2. Our Natural Spiritual State

- a. one Biblical term is the 'natural man' as in 1 Corinthians 2:14, 'But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.' which emphasizes the spiritual blindness that accompanies the nature we inherit from Adam
- b. another is found in today's Scripture reading – the 'old man' or the 'old self' – Colossians 3:9, 'Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices', a term which emphasizes the life style of a person separated from God by sin
- c. a third is, 'the flesh'
 - (A) with this you have to be careful, because sometimes it simply means bodily life, with no spiritual reference
 - (1) as is evident in the reference to Jesus Christ in Hebrews 5:7, 'In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.'
 - (2) less obviously, yet nevertheless so in reference to the disciples in Mark 14:38, 'Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'
 - (B) but in other places it clearly is speaking of our old, Adamic nature as 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, 'For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.', where Paul uses both of these meanings: though he is bodily alive, it is not in his old nature that he is speaking when he sharply reprimands the Christians who doubt his authority
 - (C) and sometimes 'flesh' merely means 'meat'
- d. and lastly, there is the related word 'carnal' whose meaning is 'fleshly'

- (A) as in 1 Corinthians 3:3, "for you are still (AV. carnal) fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?"
- (B) describing the thoughts and deeds that flow out of the old nature
- e. so it is this nature that directs an unbeliever: even in the good things he or she may do, they cannot be pleasing to God: Romans 8:7, 'because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so' – from this sad state, let us turn to ...

3. Our New Spiritual State

- a. this new state contrasts sharply to our natural spiritual state, 'old' versus 'new,' as for example in today's Scripture reading, Colossians 3:9-10, 'Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self (or, man) with its evil practices, and have put on the new self (or, man) who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created (it, or) him –', showing the capability to know truth and to do good is a result of the new birth
- b. another term, 'spiritual,' is used in contrast to the 'natural' – 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, 'But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (or, examined). But he who is spiritual appraises all things, ...', which emphasizes the spiritual capacity of the new nature implanted when a person has been born again through faith
- c. a third term, 'the spirit,' or sometimes 'the mind,' is in contrast to 'the flesh,' as Ephesians 4:22-24 shows clearly, 'that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.'
- d. a fourth is one found in today's text, 'a new creation,' or 'a new creature', a term which highlights these truths
 - (A) one, that this is the Creator's work, and not of our own will
 - (B) two, it is a creation, and so not a mere development of something that we already possessed before salvation
 - (C) three, this is new, not in the sense of something recent, but in being of a completely different

nature, a radical change

e. but Scripture also tells us that in every believer ...

4. These Two States Coexist

a. this was especially evident among the Christians in the church at Corinth, 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, 'And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?'

(A) in way of passing, let us note that this new spiritual nature which is implanted into us by the new birth

(B) just like the life of a baby needing nourishment

(C) so need born-again Christians nurturing and feeding

b. these two states are in conflict, the one with another, and will be so long as we live in this body, with first one, and then the other having domination, the as we see from Romans 7:15-25, 'For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practising what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.'

c. and yet, there remains the promise of Romans 6:14, 'For sin shall not be master over you, for you are

not under law but under grace.'

d. so, in that light let us consider for a moment

C. The Power of the New Creation

1. What is the Purpose for Believers?

a. God never does anything without a Divine purpose

b. so let us for a moment resume our spiritual journey

c. God gave to His people Israel the law, a law Paul describes in Romans 7:12; 'So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.' and in Romans 7:14, 'For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.'

d. this was a law that set Israel apart from the nations, that would testify to the wisdom of the Lord their God

e. yet God anticipated that this privileged people would forsake Him, and when they returned to Him – that is, when they converted – He made this promise in Deuteronomy 30:6 (and you should read all the context), 'Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.'

f. when their foreseen apostasy came, that promise was repeated in the prophets, as for example Ezekiel 11:19-20, 'And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.'

g. only a radical change to our being can enable us to overcome the sinful nature that is our heritage – so we can love God, can obey God

h. yet the Bible's silence indicates that although the OT saints could have a faith relationship with God, this power of the new creation, brought about by God's indwelling Spirit, remained a promise until Jesus came

i. for, ...

2. In Jesus: the Promise Is Fulfilled

a. it was at the Feast of Tabernacles, about 6 months before His death

- (A) in the eighth chapter of John's gospel, the religious rulers were already looking for the opportunity to kill him
 - (B) He was teaching in the temple as recorded in John 8:31-32, 'So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."'
 - (C) in what sense would persevering believers be made free?
 - (D) John 8:33-36 continues the dialogue, 'They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, "You will become free?"' Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.'"
 - (E) from this it is clear that Jesus is promising the freedom from the enslaving power of sin, the liberating power of the new birth
- b. to that end, the new nature which we receive from God is totally different from our old nature – as we previously read from Ephesians, 'and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.'
- (A) 'in the likeness of God' is literally, in accordance with God
 - (B) as we read, 'according to the image of the One who created him'
 - (C) and so it must necessarily be, for it is given to the one who is 'in Christ' – when you read the first two chapters of Ephesians carefully, you cannot help but discern, that to be 'in Christ' is to be saved; and to be saved is to be 'in Christ, in Him.'
- c. no wonder it is then, that this new creation, the new birth, gives to us for the first time in our lives the ability to live a life pleasing to God; Philippians 2:13, 'for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.' and Ephesians 2:10, 'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.'
- d. for the person who has been born again will be identified by these two facts evident in them:
- (A) 1 John 2:29, he or she practises righteousness: 'If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.'
 - (B) 1 John 3:9. he or she does not practise sin: 'No one who is born of God practices sin, because His

seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.'

D. Conclusion

1. being born again is the work of God in us at salvation; it accompanies conversion, so that we may cease practising sin, and instead practise righteousness
2. how our Christian life will be shaped, whether in victory or in defeat, will be determined by which of these two warring natures within us is encouraged – whether it be the old nature being fed by the values and thoughts of this world, or, whether it be the new nature being fed by the Word of God
3. Colossians 3:1-2, 'Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.'

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On the subject of regeneration, the following are useful references

- Systematic Theology, by Louis Berkhof, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1959
- Baker’s Dictionary of Theology, Everett F. Harrison, Editor-in-Chief; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1981; article by James I. Packer.
- In Understanding Be Men, by T. C. Hammond as revised and edited by David F. Wright, Inter-Varsity Press, 6th Edition, 1968
- The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine, 4th Edition, 1935 (although this confuses regeneration with conversion, &c., it has a clear summary of the various aspects of regeneration itself. I know that the late Colonel (Dr) Earl Robinson and others were involved in revising this Handbook, but I do not have a copy to see if this distinction was clarified in this later edition.)

2. although credited to others such as Walter Rauschenbusch since.

3. Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, copyright information unknown.