***Frustrating the Grace of God, No. 2

A New Creation - CSP002***

We are studying frustrating the grace of God, segment number two. The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has special grace assets provided for a supernatural way of life. He has the indwelling person of God the Holy Spirit, and he has the New Testament doctrines of the grace age recorded for him. One the great tragedies of this gift of God is to neglect it; to be unaware of it; and, to try to operate on the basis of one's human capacities. So in Galatians 5:4, the apostle Paul speaks to a group of Christians who have swung back to legalism, trying to please God by how they do things rather than how the Holy Spirit does things through them. It says, "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by the law. You have fallen from grace." In this particular case, it is applying to the fact that people are trying to live the Christian life on the basis of their human efforts, and trying to enter that life on the basis of their decisions rather than the fact of the grace provision of God. This is very important. It is a great tragedy to miss out on this doctrine.

One man very graciously, after the previous session, said, "We will stand there at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and we're going to find out that you alerted us to the importance of living under the principle of grace. We're going to come up, and we're going to hug you." Then he did. I thought that was very expressive of somebody who has caught on. There is nothing greater in the Christian life than the grace of God, and to neglect it will be to your eternal sorrow.

So we pray for you to have a positive attitude toward being teachable. We thank God for the hundreds and hundreds of people who, via tapes, will hear what we say – the fact that they will be given an opportunity to know what it means to live under the grace of God, and to be grace-oriented. It's very hard to be grace-oriented. The average Christian, even one who knows a great deal of the Word of God, is always slithering back into the Old Testament system. It is endemic within us. That's the way the sin nature works, because the devil knows that if he can keep us rolling around in the Old Testament, we will never rise to our grace heritage.

**Paul's Sin Nature**

The presence of the old sin nature in the Christian poses a threat, however, to the believer's production of divine good as a spiritual Christian. The apostle Paul struggled with this very problem. He annunciated it in some detail in Romans 7:15-25. This is something that most of us can relate to. The apostle Paul said, "I know that on the Damascus road I was born against virtually. I know from the doctrines that God has taught me that I am filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. I know that there is a sin nature within me. I know that I want to live the Christlike life."

Paul is saying, "I want to do what is befitting my position in the royal family of God." But, he said, "You know what? I don't do it. Despite my most sincere efforts, before I know it, I'm off in the goony land of sin again." For a while he struggled with this. He didn't understand the principle of grace orientation to the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. He was trying to figure out how to beat the sin nature. Well, in Romans 7, we've got the agony.

Verse 15: "For that, which I am doing I do not understand. For I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate." Do you ever do that? "But I do the very thing I do not wish to do. I agree with the law (that is the standard of absolute righteousness), confessing that it is good. So now no longer am I the one doing it, but the sin (that is, the sin nature) which dwells in me." When we have the word "sin" in the singular, it refers to that quality of the nature within us. Paul says, "I know that as a Christian, I don't want to do these sinful things. I don't want to be guilty of these mental attitude sins. But I observe that I am, and I do. But I know that this is not my choice. This is not what I want. There is something in me (and he calls it 'the sin nature') that is causing this to happen. For I know that nothing good dwells in me (that is, in my flesh), for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do. But I practice the very evil I do not wish."

Did you ever do that? Have you ever tried to tear yourself away from the evil of the sins of commission? And how about the greater evil? Yes, the greater evil of the sins of omission. The sinful failure to do what the Word of God has alerted you that you should be doing, that is befitting your lifestyle as a Christian, and you find yourself saying, "Yes, that is so true. That is in the Word of God. But I just can't do that. I can't do that." So you hunker down like a wounded animal instead of like a prince and princess in the family of God.

Verse 20: "But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but the sin nature which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man (my spiritual 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. In my mind (my spiritual orientation), I want to serve the Lord. I want to be Christlike. But in me, I'm a prisoner of something that draws me into evil."

Then we have in verse 24 this cry of agony: "Wretched man that I am? Who will set me free from the body of this death – from the death-dealing characteristics of the sin nature?" Then there is the cry of victory: "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 hand, with my flesh (my sin nature) the law of sin." He says there is a difference.

If we were to pursue this and follow on through Romans 8, there he explains how to beat the sin nature. He says, "I've got it now." I've been trying to be good, just like the Jew of the Old Testament did, by keeping rules, and doing this, and not doing that." He said, "But they couldn't keep it. The law was always broken." But he said, "Now I get it. It is what Christ and the Spirit of God who indwell me can do through me." So in Romans 8, he picks up that victory line. I just want to direct your attention to Romans 8:2-3: "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death."

**Positional Truth**

"The spirit of life in Christ Jesus." This is positional truth. This is 1 Corinthians 12:13 that speaks about being baptized into Christ. John 14:20 speaks of Christ saying, "You in Me, and I in you." This is the position that the baptism of the Holy Spirit places the Christian in at the point of salvation. He is in Christ, and this is a position from which he can never leave. He can never be taken out again. That is why you can never lose your salvation. Nothing can ever take you back out of Christ. Why? Because you didn't do anything to put yourself in there. It is entirely a work of God. I guarantee you that no human being is going to be able to undo a work of God. But if you think that you can be taken back out of Christ; and, if you think that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus does not work, and that you can be taken back out, then you are almost certainly not saved.

OK. Look out there at all these groups of Christians who do not believe in the eternal security of the believer in his salvation. Look at all those Christians out there who actually are there, and they are violating this principle of the Spirit of God – that what He does is perfect, because God is perfect, and it cannot be undone. It's tough to have fellowship with people like that. It creates a problem. How should we treat people like that? How should we associate with them? Is it alright for you to attend a church where they teach that you can lose your salvation? Is that any problem? Is it a sin? Is it something for which God is going to hold you accountable?

The apostle John, when he is speaking about the person of Jesus Christ in 2 John 9-10, talks about those who do not have a true doctrine concerning the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 9, he says, "This person does not have God, and does not abide in the teachings of God. Anybody who does not believe in the fact that God saves by baptism of the Holy Spirit into Christ at the point of salvation in an irreversible act, that person is showing that he is depending upon his good works, as well as what Christ has done. And you cannot put the two together."

Notice what John says in verses 10-11: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching concerning Christ and the secure salvation He has provided, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting." Boy, some Christians have a very hard time with that. Don't socialize with him, inviting him to your house. Do not give him a greeting, meaning do not try to treat him with anything more than civility. Wave at him as you walk by the street, by the monastery, but you don't get into social activities with him. This is the devil's way. How does Satan want to bring you down? How does he want to contaminate you? How does he want to contaminate your Christians? By putting an alien force of Satan influencing you? So if you want to bring yourself down spiritually, just have close proximity to an unsaved person.

John says, "That's very dangerous." You do not go to their church and say, "Oh, sure, we're all Christians. We're all one. That's great." You will pay dearly for it, and your family will pay dearly for it. Verse 11 says, "For the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds." Did you get that? For you to treat him with cordiality; for you to welcome him into your presence and, for you to have him there (that person who is wrong on salvation), your social treatment of him in that way says that what he believes is OK with you, and that's an insult to the Lord God. It's an insult to the Lord Jesus Christ. And God says that is sinful. Don't do it.

So Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the spirit of life is that we become spiritual Christians first by being placed into Christ at salvation," and that makes it possible for us to operate under the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the essential condition for producing divine good works, for which we will get rewards. You cannot serve God if you're an alien in His family. Those who do not have a genuine experience of salvation: they're all aliens. We have churches full of them. Some of the most successful are filled with those who do not have Christ.

The other side of the picture, at the end of verse 2, is the law of sin and death. To be under the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus set you free from the law of sin and death. Here, "sin" refers to the old sin nature. The old sin nature produced a spiritual death in people. Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man, sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all of sin." How did we all sin? The baby is a guilty sinner. If he dies as a baby, he goes to heaven because the grace of God covers him until he is able to exercise volition. But why is he born a sinner? Because the sin of Adam is imputed down to all of us. So we are guilty on that count alone.

In the Christian, the old sin nature produces that temporal death of breaking fellowship with the Father, and the condition for producing divine good works is frustrated and undermined, and that Christian can serve like crazy, but all he does is carnality – human good works.

Then in verse 3, it says, "For what the law (of Moses) could not do (that is, in making a godly person through the 613 rules that told you what to do to be godly), weak as it was through the flesh (the law was good, but it was weak through the sin nature), God did for us. He kept the law absolutely perfectly for us. How? By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." Did you notice that? "In the likeness of sinful flesh." Jesus Christ was true humanity, but He didn't have a sin nature, because he didn't have a human father who gives you the sin nature. As an offering for sin, He condemned sin nature in the flesh. A religious system like the Law of Moses, of human self-righteousness to gain the blessings of God, never works. The outward system of rules cannot control the internal evil of the sin nature. That's the problem.

So the divine solution is that God came through Christ, who kept the absolute righteous demands of the law, and verse 4 says, "In order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, not according to the spirit." Because of the death of Jesus Christ; the indwelling Holy Spirit; and, and the principles of doctrine, we Christians can live a sinless godly life. We can't live it perfectly, but the more mature you become, the more time you're logging in temporal fellowship with God your Father. It's all made possible because we don't walk according to the rules of the Old Testament.

You be very careful when you go charging out to the Old Testament to do something the way they used to do it under the Mosaic system. You be very careful when you associate with a group, and when you walk in, the first thing they have up there is an altar. Or the first thing they have up there is some preacher in a gown like he was an Aaronic priest, and he's going through little rituals up there at that altar. That altar says that God has to be appeased. God has to be propitiated and satisfied for sin. What an insult! Anytime you walk into a church and there's an altar there, if you are a Christian that knows anything, you know that Christ is not there. Turn around and walk out. It is a place of religion. Religion is Satan's trump card in the game of life. It is Christ who has removed the need for any more sacrifices. If you don't have any more sacrifices, you don't need an altar.

When the Christian sins, he's out from under the law of the spirit of life (or the power grid), and he's under the law of sin and death. That is a terrible place to be. A Christian who is out of temporal fellowship, it's just as if you were not saved at all in terms of what he does. All of his good works are human good, being produced by his own efforts and his own nature. I mean, he could do the same thing under the filling of the Holy Spirit, and it would become a great reward in heaven. But under the sin nature, out of fellowship with the Father, all it does is add more guilt to him.

So how do you return when you find that you, as a Christian, have slipped away (not from your salvation, but) from your walk with God, where the power of God functions in your life; where you're living under grace; and, where the blessings of God are upon you? You go to 1 John 1:9, which tells us to confess our sins. It tells us to confess our sins, not to a priest, not to a friend, but only to God the Father. 1 John 1:9 is the verse that enables us to stay under the law of the spirit of life: "If we confess our sins." That word "if" in the Greek means maybe you will, and maybe you won't. But if you do, you admit (which is what confess means), "He (God the Father) is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins." He'll forgive you that sin every time, and He can do it on a righteous basis without violating His holy character, because Christ paid for the sin. And He'll forgive you.

Then there are those things you forgot that also took you out of fellowship. They also violated the will of God in your life. They were subtle things, mental attitude sins, that you may not even be aware of. That's what's so great about the last part of that verse: "He cleanses us from all unrighteousness." If you deal with the sins you know, God takes care of those that you have become oblivious to.

When you have done that, you are back under the power of the Spirit of God and the grace life. But you can walk right out if you don't do one other thing. Forget the sin. Forget the thing that you did. In Philippians 3:13-14 Paul says, "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet. (That is, all that is involved in living the Christian life.) But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind." I'm forgetting all those sins I've confessed. I'm forgetting all those things I've done. I'm not brooding about it. Oh, yes. I took Christians. I murdered them. I gave them great misery. Yes, I was a blasphemer, but all that's been forgiven, and I don't I don't dwell on that anymore. But I reach forward to what lies ahead: "I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus," meaning at the Judgment Seat of Christ – the rewards.

So it's very important that you don't become a chain smoker in the Christian life with your sin – lighting one (cigarette) sin with another. When you confess, you forget, because that is God's way. Confess to name the sin to God. Forgetting means to neutralize its effects in your life. You don't brood on it.

**Discipline**

To stay out of the grace way of life is to bring yourself under the discipline of God. This answers some of the questions like, "Well, why did this happen to me? Why has this happened to me – this terrible thing? Why this tragedy? Why this great loss? Why this huge disappointment? Why this personal hurt. I'm one of God's children."

In Hebrews 12:1, God the Holy Spirit gives us a little guideline about the principle of being out of fellowship. If you do not follow the pattern of getting back in with confession, what are you going to go? You're going to go into discipline: "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." "The cloud of witnesses that surround us" are the apostles and the prophets whose information has been recorded for us in the Bible. The cloud of witnesses are not Christians who are looking down and watching. No, they don't see us. They don't watch us. They don't look upon us. They couldn't care less to be observing what we're doing in the glory land that they have entered. But for us, we are to be setting aside on the basis of the instruction of the doctrines of grace life, and laying aside these things that drag us down and entangle us in this life so that we cannot run the race of service for which God called us.

Verse two: "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. The Lord Jesus Christ was no whiner. He wasn't, as he went through that Passion Week, and they were beating up on Him and drawing His physical blood and turning His face into a pulp. He didn't whine and say, "Why is this happening to me? Why is God doing this to me? That's what we like to do when we hit upon those tragic times in life. Why did this happen to me? Well, Peter says, "Count yourself honored by God to be able to suffer as a Christian. Don't count yourself honored to suffer as a wrongdoer. But if you do what's right as a Christian, and people of your society bring misery to your life, be aware of the fact that God is going to recognize that, and your treasure in heaven will be enhanced.

Hebrews 12:3: "For consider Him who has endured such hostility (that is, Jesus) by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin." I doubt that any of us have shed any blood in our dealing with sin, or in our standing up for the Lord. A number of times, the apostle Paul took a beating at the hands of the religious and government authorities. So it's not too bad for us to stand up and to act as a member of the royal family of God under the grace of God in the world through which we move. Some of us don't like that. We want to be acceptable to the world. We want to buddy with the world. They might help us earn some money. They might give some favors to us. They might do something nice for us. So we want to accommodate ourselves to be acceptable to the world.

You have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons: "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by him. For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." How's that for language? He whips every son whom he receives.

One of the great conservative political commentators wrote an article I read recently. In it, he suggested that the practice in some countries of the East of caning people (taking a bamboo cane and applying it to the gluteus maximus) hurts. It really stings. Something like five snapping blows makes an impression. He said the way we can straighten out the youth of America is by caning. This may be exaggerated. I'm not sure this is true. But he said, "That's the punishment we need to give to the person who wants to be a deliberate, youthful violator of civilized conduct. We give him five whacks on the gluteus maximus with a cane." In these countries that do that, that is a fearful potential judgment of the judge. They hate to hear that. Our man here in America said, "And we should do it on TV." Just announce that tonight's caning will be on NBC at 8 o'clock. All the gluteus maximuses are out there ready, and you will learn a lesson. Learn it from this, or see how it feels yourself someday.

Well, that's behind this. This is what God does spiritually. He scourges. Can you imagine a word like that? He canes us. Why did God let this happen in my life? Well, I guarantee you there was a reason. You may learn it now. If not now, you will get it in heaven. But I will tell you something. He hasn't changed His character. He is love. He will not treat us in any way except that as a child in His family, any more than he would treat the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever the problem is.

Verse 7 says, "It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline. But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children, and not sons." Here, the writer of Hebrews says, "The only people (in this culture of the first century) that don't get discipline are the ones who are illegitimate children. They don't have any inheritance. They're not going to get anything from the family. They're not going to represent the family. So nobody is trying to make them do right. But if you are a member of the family of God, God is not going to let you get away with doing that which is displeasing to Him, and bringing disgrace to His family.

"Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of Spirits, and live? For they discipline us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good that we may share His Holiness." When discipline comes, it is to make you more godlike. Sometimes it takes discipline for us to do right, just as it does in a small child. When we discipline the kid, and we spank him, he learns to do right.

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful. Yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak, and the knees that are feeble," and so on. So here is the promise to those who are out of fellowship: "Strengthen the knees that are feeble, make straight the paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all men and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one come short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it, many be defiled."

When you do not operate under the principles of the grace of God, there's no place for you to go except to your old sin nature. And your old sin nature, I guarantee you, will lead you into bitterness over the things that come into your life. You can count on it. "Many be defiled." Do you see that last word at the end of verse 15? You not only defile yourself with your bitterness when you do not live under the grace system of life, but you defile your husband; your children; your families; you extended family; and, your Christian family.

This Greek word is very illuminating. The word "defiled" is "miaino" in Greek. "Miaino" refers to an act such as was done throughout the Middle Ages. The way you disposed of the sewage of the night in the chamber pot, you threw it out the window into the street. If somebody happened to be walking down below me, boy, are they ever "miainod." They'll know that something happened. This Greek word is used to describe the Christian who is going through bitterness. You stink like somebody's chamber pot. Now when you read it, it becomes a lot more forceful: "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness (which is the alternative of not going by grace) springs up, causes trouble, and by it many be defiled." And you notice it's not only that you're going to end up stinking, but you spread it to everybody else around you.

After confession, you should be aware of the fact that the discipline may continue. There are certain things that we may do out of the will of God (certain moral violations) that have consequences that cannot be undone. But the discipline, upon confession, will either be lessened, or it will cease, but it may also continue. But if it continues, then that discipline will no longer be a suffering. It will then be a blessing. Suddenly you have put yourself in a position where you have a lasting result of an act of evil. Confession of sin cannot remove the evidence and the consequence of that evil. But God will take it and turn it to a blessing. Hebrews 12:10-11: "For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He (God) disciplines us for our good, that we may share His Holiness." All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful. Yet, to those who have been trained by it, afterwards, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Whatever the consequences may be, it will be the peaceful fruit of righteousness. You'll be once more at peace in your soul, and God will give you the grace to carry the consequences.

The Christian's response to discipline includes that confessed sin should not set up series sinning, as I already pointed out. You accept the forgiveness that God promised to give, and then you forget it. You don't keep lighting, like on a Christmas tree in a series section, where one light turns on the next light after it. If you're not oriented to the grace of God, that is what you will do.

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

Our focus here is going to be primarily 2 Corinthians 5:17. Here is the magnificent consequence of grace. It is the fact that you can rise up the shoddy life that characterizes the average person of the world, and that characterizes the Christian who is not taught the principles of doctrine, and the Christian who does not know how to handle his own sin. This is the Christian who, because he does not know how to walk, filled with the Spirit under the control of the Holy Spirit, by the spirit of the law of life, he doesn't have the power to say, "No," to sin. Nobody in his right mind says, "Yes" to sin. You have to be crazy to do that. You have to be spiritually crazy to say, "Yes" to sin. Nobody allows a root of bitterness or anything else to arise unless you are out of sync spiritually in your mind.

So what have we become in Christ Jesus that gives us the capacity to live like God, and to live like the person of Christ in His humanity. The magnificent 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old things passed away. Behold, new things have come." Here is the fantastic provision of God. This verse 17 is the climax of all the verses of chapter 5 that come before it. The first 16 verses talk about the eternal and wonderful things – the provisions of the grace of God for the Christian. Notice, for example, in 2 Corinthians 5:1: "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens."

**Death**

Okay, your body dies. Your soul and spirit never die. You go as Christians right into the presence of the Lord in heaven. You're on your way off to the New Jerusalem, ushered in by the angels. That's what's happening. But when that physical body dies, that tent in which we live is gone, temporarily, until the Lord brings it back to life forever again. We have, in the meantime, some kind of a body in heaven. Your soul and spirit does not float around up there bodiless. I cannot explain that to you. I cannot define what it is. It is some kind of a house; it is not made with hands; but it is a spiritual provision that God has for us as a temporary body until we come back at the rapture and get our bodies back, at the resurrection of all the saints.

So here we have something of a great divine provision, and this will be part of our grace provision from the Lord. Please notice verse 5: "Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge." We who are Christians, have God the Holy Spirit indwelling us permanently. He is the token to us that we're going to get to heaven. The Holy Spirit can never leave you. Once He comes into you, He can't leave because you've been baptized into Christ by the Spirit of God, and He will not reverse that baptism. Therefore, you have this token (this assurance) that you will go to heaven.

Notice verse 6: "Therefore being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body, we're absent from the Lord." So as long as you're here in this body, you're absent from the Lord. But once you're out of this body, you are in the presence of the Lord, and you have a temporary body to carry you through until the rapture.

Once you're out of this body, the rest of you does remain. I've had a couple of funerals to conduct recently. Boy, does it ever remind me again how everything is left behind? That poor person in that casket can't take anything with him. Of course, the Bible tells us that. Paul says, "We brought nothing into this world, and we're sure not going to take anything out of it." The only thing you have with you after you leave this world is what you've stored in heaven in terms of your divine good works. That's where your riches will lie. You can make your own decision where you want to keep those things.

Verse 10: "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad. There is the Judgment Seat of Christ. That is what is coming for us.

Verse 15: "He died for all, that they who lived should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." Boy, does that ever stick like a broken chicken bone in the throat of most Christians. What do you mean? He died for all of us? For what reason? So that we, who live on this earth, and we who still have breath in this body, and blood flowing in the veins, should live no longer for ourselves? You mean I'm not going to get up and go to work tomorrow for myself? No. You are going to do that for the Lord: "For him who died and rose again on my behalf." Do you mean that all going of this school is not for me, but it's for the Lord? Do you mean that all of this training of my children is not for me? It's for the Lord? Yes. Do you mean that everything in my life all day long is what the Lord wants me to do? Yes.

So we get to verse 17 with that fantastic grace provision described in those first 16 verses. Verse 17 says, "Therefore." That means "so that." It indicates a conclusion based upon these first 16 verses. "If" is the Greek word "ei" and it is first class condition, which means, "This is the case." You can translate it as the word "Since." This is true. "Since any man" means anyone (any Christian person) is in Christ." This is a term for a believer. Therefore, "If any man is in Christ." There is no verb in the Greek language here. When the Greek wants to punch something into your mind, and make it stand out, it jerks the verb out. What it says is, "If any man in Christ." It focuses upon exactly what the position is. That position comes about at the point of salvation. This is positional truth that he's talking about – the position of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:27-28 amplifies this for us: "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." This is not water baptism. This is Holy Spirit baptism. "There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is not a slave nor free man. There is neither male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Here is the only place that there is equality in the human race. The human race, especially human governments, are always trying to produce equality in a society. It is not equal any place else except here in Christ (Galatians 3:27-28).

Then 1 Corinthians 12:13, which we've already alluded to, says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, all made to drink of one Spirit to be indwelt by one Holy Spirit." So God sees us now set apart in His Son Christ, and we have all of the merits of Jesus Christ.

**A New Creation**

So it says, in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if (since) a man in Christ (and again, there is no 'he is.' It's just) a new creature." Being in Christ, or born again, makes us, actually, the translation should be, "A new creation." This is a new creation. Being in Christ or being born again spiritually makes you a new creation in the era of grace. This is not a new creation because there's something you do or don't do. Did you get that?

A lot of preachers like to take this and say, "You see, old things are passed away. All of sinning things you do, don't do that anymore. Behold, all the new things have come. Do all the nice things; the right things; and, the godly things." This has nothing to do with what you're doing. So understand that this is grace provision of God, and you had nothing to do but receive it from His kindness. A new believer is an immature, untaught Christian, and he is a new creation in Christ Jesus. This has nothing to do with his way of living. This is not a merit earning system.

There are many church meetings that end by asking people to walk the aisle to promise that they will act like new creations in Christ Jesus. What they mean is to come forward and make a commitment. They mean to come to the altar and pray and say, "I won't do this anymore and I'll start doing this." That has nothing to do with it. It's not what you do. It's what Christ does. All of you, whether you're good, bad or indifferent, personally, you are a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Even unsaved people give up things to get to heaven. You don't get spiritual by giving up things. We all, by our old sin nature, love to make these sacrifices. We all love to think about ourselves as suffering for Jesus. There's no more monstrous Christian (no more boring Christian, or tiresome creature) than the guy who walks around wanting to suffer for Jesus. The merit system is out. It is out concerning how to get to salvation, and it is out afterwards to enjoy the Christian life. This verse has to do with what God and His grace has done for you, and not for what you can do for yourself.

"Therefore, if any man in Christ, he's a new creature." There are two Greek words for "new." One is "neos." This means recent. I have a new car. It's a recent model car. That's not the word used here. This is why you have to have someone show you a little bit from what is in the Greek, so you understand what the Holy Spirit is saying. This word is actually "kainos." This means "new," not in time, as "neos" is, but "in kind." So what we're talking about is a new species. Wonder of wonders! The grace of God, here in 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that we Christians are a new species of humanity on the face of the earth. By the grace of God, we are a grace-produced people; a grace-oriented people; and, a grace life type of people. That's why it is a new creation. It is used of Christians in the church age. It is a species that began on the day of Pentecost with the baptism of the Holy Spirit when He joined all believers in that upper room into one body. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was delayed until the Lord Jesus Christ went to heaven. The baptism of the Holy Spirit never existed in the Old Testament, because Judaism never put you into the Godhead. It never put you into a member of the Trinity.

John 7:39: "But this Jesus spoke of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit), whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." The context here says that Jesus is going to send the Holy Spirit to replace Him. The result will be that the Holy Spirit will indwell the believer, and that out of us will flow (verse 38), "Rivers of living water." I'm sorry to say that for most Christians, what flows is rivers of stinking dead water. "He who believes in me," as the Scriptures said, "from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." Unfortunately, we are focused not on Christ; on serving Him; on proclaiming the gospel; nor, on teaching people the principles of doctrine. We're focused upon the things below of this world. That's what occupies us. There is no living water flowing from us – anybody. And that's not the way it should be.

In Acts 1:5, Jesus says, "For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So after Jesus left, in came the Holy Spirit ten days later. The Old Testament saints were born again – yes, per Romans 4:3. But they were not in union with Jesus Christ because they were not a special species of believers. In the Bible, that species is called the body of Christ. Ephesians 1:22-23: "He put all things in subjection under His feet (the Father under the Son's feet), and gave Him, as head over all things, to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all, which is His body which is being filled with Him." We are being filled by Jesus Christ. Why? Because we're a new creation. We're a different kind of human being that never existed upon the earth before. A Christian is a new creation because, at the point of salvation, the baptism of the Holy Spirit automatically put him in Christ. And this is not because you have changed your behavior pattern.

The word "creature" ("We are a new creature") in the Greek is "ktisis." That is not a creature. That is "creation." We are a new creation. Christian is a new kind in God's order, and he is a special kind. A Christian is not a new kind because he achieves some level of victorious living. Nothing we do makes us a new creation. We are a new kind entirely because of the grace of God. We don't deserve it. That's what grace means. As God's unique new breed in creation, we have become the prime target, however, of Satan's attack.

So that is where we are. We can live by the law of the spirit of life – the power of the Holy Spirit that involves us. We haven't gotten too much into that yet. I just want you to understand what you are in Jesus Christ. You are a new creation of God, specially created for a very special purpose. The best thing of all is that He wants to pour out blessing upon you. Never forget that your heavenly Father is sitting up in heaven tapping his foot: "Oh, I wish Sam would get on track. I wish Suzie would get back in fellowship. Look at all the things we've got for her up here that I want to send down. Look at all the promises and blessings that are out there."

Instead, they want to act like they were part of the old species of the world – part of the Satan gang. Find out who you are, people, and start acting like the new creation that you are – in Christ Jesus. The result will be a power; a capacity; a satisfaction; and, a purpose of life that you wouldn't believe. Suddenly you will find that you're walking into your bedroom at night (and I can testify to this); you set the alarm clock; and, you finally go to bed, and can't wait to get up. You can't wait until when you wake up in the night to open that eye and look up at that window and see how much light is there to see how close you are to dawn. You can't wait to get up, as a new species in Jesus Christ, and start living the grace life again for that day. It's one day at a time. When you've used it up, you've used it for the glory of God, as a child of God for your eternal reward, or you've squandered it by meddling around, and getting hot and bothered about the things below. The thing that we need to get excited about is the fact of our eternal destiny.

Now, what if our brother here in Berean church, who had that experience of a government briefing, and being in touch with things that are very sobering, is right? He has looked (just as human evaluation) at what is happening, and the things that are moving very quickly toward a world that is being prepared for antichrist, world domination control, and he has said that it will only take three more years to make it. In effect, he's saying three years, and then the trumpet sounds, and we're out of here. What if he's right?

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971

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