

The Real You

By Richard Jordan

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:
old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
2 Cor. 5:17

Understanding what it means to be a "*new creature in Christ*" is absolutely essential for enjoying the abundant life of freedom that Jesus Christ has provided for every believer.

We learn how to avoid the common traps of poor self-image and self-condemnation as we begin to view ourselves from God's perspective – rather than from man's perspective. Assurance, confidence and consistency will characterize our daily lives as we grow in an understanding of what God has provided for us in Christ.

We need to begin at the beginning: What does it mean to be a *new creature* and what impact does this have on my life?

IN CHRIST

While *dispensationally* it is possible to be "*in Christ*" either according to the *prophetic program* (Gen. 22:18, Isa. 45:25) or the *mystery program*, (Eph. 2:13; 3:6) the term itself is actually a *redemptive* term, as 1 Cor. 15:22 demonstrates:

"For as IN ADAM ALL DIE, EVEN SO IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE."

In the current dispensation of grace, when we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit instantly baptizes us "*into Christ*" and thus into His Body. Being "*in Christ*" is often referred to as *positional truth*. The baptism of **1 Cor. 12:13** is thus rightly viewed as the *mechanics* of positional truth:

"For BY ONE SPIRIT ARE WE ALL BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Much religious confusion surrounds the topic of baptism, but *in Scripture* the main issue behind baptism is *total identification*. This is something that happens instantaneously to every individual believer the moment we trust Christ: *We are totally identified with Jesus Christ*.

It is *in Christ* that we are "*blessed with all spiritual blessings*." (Eph. 1:3) It is *in Christ* that we are made complete. (Col. 2:10) It is *in Christ* that "*in every thing ye are enriched by Him*." (1 Cor. 1:5) Thus it is *in Christ* that we are made "*new creatures*."

We are no longer "*in Adam*;" now we are "*in Christ*." When we step out of Adam into Christ, He steps out of heaven into us and makes us into a new creature – a member of the "*one new man*," the Body of Christ.

THE OLD CREATION

In order to understand our new identity as new creatures *in Christ*, perhaps we should start with Adam and the "*old things*" of which we once were a part.

Paul sets forth the story of the old creation in Rom. 5 by beginning where the Bible begins, with the first man, Adam:

“Wherefore, as BY ONE MAN SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD, AND DEATH BY SIN; AND SO DEATH PASSED UPON ALL MEN, FOR THAT ALL HAVE SINNED:”

“(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”

“Nevertheless DEATH REIGNED from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.” (Rom. 5:12-14)

What went wrong with the old creation is that the first man sinned. Paul mentions this in almost every verse:

“...THROUGH THE OFFENCE OF ONE MANY BE DEAD...”

“...IT WAS BY ONE THAT SINNED...FOR THE JUDGMENT WAS BY ONE TO CONDEMNATION...”

“...BY ONE MAN'S OFFENCE DEATH REIGNED BY ONE...”

“...BY THE OFFENCE OF ONE JUDGMENT CAME UPON ALL MEN TO CONDEMNATION...”

“...BY ONE MAN'S DISOBEDIENCE MANY WERE MADE SINNERS...” (Vs. 15-19)

Every person born into this world is “*in Adam*.” Thus the whole race was affected by Adam’s sin and Paul identifies at least three results that we all inherit from him:

“...by the offence of one JUDGMENT CAME UPON ALL MEN TO CONDEMNATION...”

“...by one man’s disobedience MANY WERE MADE SINNERS...”

“...SIN HATH REIGNED UNTO DEATH...” (Vs. 18, 19, 21)

“*Condemnation*,” “*death*,” “*made sinners*” – that’s what we receive from Adam. We are born with the same nature and destiny that Adam possessed after his fall.

Every grave marker in every cemetery is a testimony that God’s Word is true. Because all of us have sinned, death works in us all. “Death reigns” as king over the old creation. And this is more than simply physical death, for Rev. 21:8 declares:

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall HAVE THEIR PART IN THE LAKE WHICH BURNETH WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE: WHICH IS THE SECOND DEATH.”

Adam’s legacy is that in our very *nature* we are sinners. We sin because we are sinners – it’s our nature to do so. *Sin reigns* – it is our master; we are its slave. The testimony of Scripture is clear: We are “*the servants of sin*.” (Rom. 6:17, 20) In John 8:34, Jesus Christ declares:

“...Verily, verily, I say unto you, WHOSOEVER COMMITTETH SIN IS THE SERVANT OF SIN.”

Sin has come and gripped us so tightly that it runs all of the old creation. Selfishness, anger, lying, self-centeredness, lust, stealing, malice, bitterness, greed, evil thoughts, pride-make your own list. The Bible calls it sin and it so dominates the old creation that these things are thought of as normal human behavior. People do them all the time. We don’t think anything of it because “that’s the way people are.”

Exactly: Sin runs the old creation – it’s the boss and no one escapes. In Adam, we inherit condemnation, death and a sin nature which can only bring forth evil. This is our *identity* in Adam; it is who we are in the old creation.

THE NEW CREATURE

The “new creature” is a uniquely Pauline term¹ and is the counterpart of the old creation.² Corporately it is the “*one new man*” of Eph. 2:13-15, the Body of Christ. But this corporate, dispensational usage has its corresponding impact on each *individual* believer. The context of 2 Cor. 5:17 is clearly dispensational – our commission as “Ambassadors for Christ.” Thus, Paul’s emphasis on our individual participation in this grand task is all the more important: “...*if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*”³

In the old creation, we were identified with Adam... his life, his way of thinking and acting, his independent attitudes. Adam was all and in all. When we come into the new creation, “Christ is all, and in all.” (Col. 3:11) Christ is now our *life*. (Col. 3:4) He is our *mind* (Phil. 2:5) and our *walk*. (Eph. 5:2) It is Christ who is being formed in us. (Gal. 4:19) We have “put on Christ...,” (Gal. 3:27) ...His actions, His attitude, His way of thinking. We have a whole new way of life in Christ:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: AND THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20)

In place of Adam’s condemnation, we have Christ’s righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21); in place of Adam’s death, we receive Christ’s *life*, (Rom. 6:23) and in exchange for Adam’s slavery to sin we have glorious *freedom* in Christ. (Rom. 6:6, 7)

Romans 6:3, 4 declares:

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

In Christ we are now empowered to “*walk in newness of life.*” The “*old things*” – condemnation, death, slavery to sin-have passed away and now we have *righteousness, life and freedom in Christ.*

It is absolutely essential that we recognize our new *identity in Christ*, that we understand who God has made us in Christ. It is only as we recognize this glorious fact that our behavior can be changed.

We can never hope to “live the Christian life.” It is an impossible task. Only Jesus Christ can live it. Hence, Paul’s emphasis on “*Christ in you.*” The life of Christ has been placed in us so that it can live *through us*. We do not simply need a change in our behavior; we need a totally *new identity*. And this is exactly what we have *in Christ*.

As we learn to look at ourselves and our circumstances from God’s perspective, we find the secret of Rom. 12:2,

“...Be not conformed to this world: but BE YE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND....”

¹ Compare the term *new birth*. Paul does not connect it with his teachings concerning the Body of Christ. It suffices as a figure for the change necessary for the sons of Israel, fitting them for the earthly Kingdom. For us, far more is needed. Like Adam, we are not a mere renewal in kind but an entirely new creature. See the editor’s article, *Do You Really Need to be Born Again?*

² “*Creature*” and “*creation*” are, of course, basically the same. The distinction – and hence the use of *creature* in verses like 2 Cor. 5:17 is that *creature* refers to a *living* creation.

³ For those who object to the italicized words in this verse in the KJV, we point out that the fact they are there is a demonstration that they are necessary to properly express the sense of the verse in English. They are legitimate, correct and necessary.

The key to “transformed” behavior is “the renewing of your mind” – developing a *totally new mindset, a new preoccupation*. Our behavior changes as we replace the old, inferior, worthless way of thinking with a new way of thinking... thinking like God thinks. This is the key to living as a new creature, to having the power of the living God working inside us.

LEARNING TO FLY

This transformation is illustrated, however imperfectly, by the story of the caterpillar who wanted to fly. In many ways, Mr. Caterpillar was much like us. Caterpillars are all legs and mouth! They spend their whole life crawling around *destroying* vegetation and fruit. But they can’t fly!

Mr. C., however, longed to fly. In fact, he tried repeatedly to do so using every idea and suggestion he could come up with to accomplish his goal.

First, he climbed to the top of his favorite plant, confidently walked out to the end of a twig and jumped, believing with all his heart he could do it! To his chagrin, he plunged swiftly to the ground landing with a sound “splat”!

Following an extended period of convalescence and recovery, Mr. C. again set out to accomplish his goal. This time he had had several months to further analyze things. Realizing he must do something to escape the law of gravity, he began researching ideas. Upon reading about hang gliding, he ordered a hang glider kit.

After packing the kit to the top of his plant, he assembled his little hang glider, strapped him self into its harness and again walked to the end of the twig. Facing the glider into the wind at just the right angle, Mr. C. again stepped off the end of the twig.

For one exciting moment he was thrilled as an updraft actually lifted him up a bit. However, it was soon obvious that his direction was once again earthward. Down, down he went as he mulled over his problem, “The law of gravity gets me every time!”

Making something less than a “soft” landing caused a crowd to gather. One onlooker, hearing Mr. C.’s complaint about the persistence of the law of gravity, stepped forward to say, “I know what you need – a gasoline engine! It works every time.”

After gathering all the necessary equipment, up he went again to the top of the plant. He fashioned a set of wings out of a large leaf, strapped on the engine, started it and zap!... off he went in a dizzying, uncontrollable spin. Although the ride was exhilarating, its ultimate direction was the same as all the others. Long before the gas had run out, Mr. C. crashed unceremoniously into the side of a tree and sank sadly to the ground. Failure seemed to be his lot.

As he sought to pick up the pieces, a stranger approached to see if he could help. After learning of Mr. C.’s various exploits the stranger said, “Your problem is simple: If you want to fly, you’ve got to become a new creature!”

A bit shaken by such an idea, Mr. C. responded, “A new creature? But how can I possibly do that!”

“You can’t,” came the reply. “But a miracle can happen in your life and you can be created brand new!”

We interrupt our story for a moment to say that we are in just the same situation: Born as members of an old creation, we can’t fly. We are unable to escape “*the law of sin and death*.” Try as hard as we may, give it all we’ve got, be as innovative as possible and we are still bound by sin’s slavery.

What do we need? We need to become new creatures... to get out of Adam and into the Lord Jesus Christ. No one can do that by himself. It is a miracle only God can perform.

Going back to Mr. Caterpillar: one day he climbs out on that same twig and begins to build a little house called a chrysalis. Then he crawls inside, shuts the door and goes to sleep... and a miracle happens!

We can't see anything from the outside for several months but then one day the cocoon begins to move. Soon it cracks open and out comes, not a caterpillar, but a brand new creature: a miracle has happened and a beautiful butterfly emerges.

Now, remember, the same creature comes out of the cocoon but it is completely different. The caterpillar only crawls, spending its life chewing up plants and ruining fruit. The butterfly flies, sipping the nectar from the flower and pollinating them so that there will be more fruit.

And this is just how we are. In Adam we were fruit wreckers – spiritually dead toward God and bound in sin. One day we came to trust in Christ. Understanding from God's Word that He loved us and sent His Son to die for our sins, we stopped trying to save ourselves and simply trusted what He had done for us at Calvary for our forgiveness and salvation.

Thus all our sins were forgiven, God counted us righteous before Him and He gave us the gift of eternal life, making us alive in Christ. **At that moment**, when we trusted in Christ, we became new creatures. The old condemnation, death and slavery were exchanged for righteousness, life and freedom in Christ.

All this happened when we trusted Christ. We didn't feel it, see it or sense it, but it happened. It is a real spiritual blessing that becomes ours in that moment. Now we need to learn to live like the new creature we are in Christ.

Let's return to Mr. C. He's there on that twig again, but now he's a beautiful butterfly. He's the same guy, but he's different. He is a butterfly. Now he has to learn to think and act like a butterfly.

As he considers the change in his life, our friend is a bit unsure how to proceed. "This is all new to me. How do I do this? I really want to fly. I think I know how. I've certainly tried hard enough in the past." Thus he walks out to the end of his twig and jumps. To his disappointment and horror, he again plummets straight to the ground.

"I just don't understand it! The law of gravity still holds on to me. I've got to try harder. I know what to do – my hand glider!"

So he gets the hand glider, carries it to the top of the plant and once again laboriously puts it together, preparing to sail away into the sky. As he steps off the twig, however, his experience tells him what his heart feared all along... it just wasn't working. Down he again goes. Nothing seemed to work – the law of gravity still held him fast no matter how he tried to free himself.

Once again he sat in despair. What was wrong? Once again he racked his brain for an answer. "I've got it! The gas engine! That's what I need; more power!"

But the results were still the same. The added power only made things worse, making the crash more devastating than ever.

As he sat amid the latest wreckage, dejected, defeated and tired-to-the-bone from trying to fly and failing, his mind kept questioning. "What's the matter with me? I thought I was a new creature – a butterfly. Butterflies are supposed to be able to fly, but everything I try fails. It's simply impossible for me to fly! The law of gravity is too much for me."

After awhile that same stranger came by and asked what has our butterfly so down in the dumps? As he pours out his frustrations, the stranger begins to chuckle. "Why, you're not a caterpillar – you are a butterfly! God has given you something brand new in your life: Look on your back! Those are wings. You are made for flying!"

“But what about the law of gravity?” Mr. B. asks sarcastically. “Look! See how your wings are shaped? They are designed in a special way so, when the air passes over their top, a vacuum is created and it sucks you up into the sky. Gravity still works but the new wings God has given you have a *new law*, the law of aerodynamic lift and it overcomes the law of gravity. Try it!”

“Well,” hesitates Mr. B., “I’ve never done this before. I know all about the law of gravity, but I’ll trust the law of aerodynamics to overcome it.”

Out on the twig he goes. This time he simply spreads his wings and flaps them naturally in the breeze. Suddenly his feet leave the ground and he is flying! What has happened? Mr. B. has *quit thinking like a caterpillar and has begun thinking like the butterfly he really is*.

Christian friend, so long as we continue thinking like an old creature counting on our old ways, our human strength and ingenuity, as long as we put our “confidence in the flesh,” we too are destined to fail. “*The law of sin and death*” will hold us fast.

It is when we begin to think like the new creature we are in Christ that we begin to fly. Mr. Butterfly could not fly thinking like a caterpillar. He had to learn to be who he was – a new creature. So it is with us. We have to learn to think like the new creature we are in Christ. Then Rom. 8:2 will be a reality in the details of our life:

“For THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS HATH MADE ME FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH.”

Like the law of gravity, “*the law of sin and death*” drags us down no matter how we struggle against it. It is only “*the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus*” that sets us free so we do not have to crash, be pulled down and sin anymore. It sets us free from our old habits, our old ways so we can walk in newness of life. What ever we may be struggling with, the answer is the same: Christ living in us. It is only through this totally exchanged life that we can begin to see the change in life we desire.

The Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit has come to live in us to enable us to walk in newness of life in our homes, our marriages, with our children, on the job, at church, when we are all by ourselves – in every situation. And just how high can we fly? Rom. 6:11- 13 gives us an idea:

“Likewise RECKON YE ALSO YOURSELVES TO BE DEAD INDEED UNTO SIN, BUT ALIVE UNTO GOD through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

“LET NOT SIN THEREFORE REIGN IN YOUR MORTAL BODY, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but YIELD YOURSELVES UNTO GOD, AS THOSE THAT ARE ALIVE FROM THE DEAD, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

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