

CHANGED

by
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*“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” **II Corinthians 5:17, 18 NAS***

The word translated “reconciled,” literally means “to change thoroughly.” It does not refer to merely fixing something up and making it better, but indicates a complete change to something new. The sense of the word, as used here in **II Corinthians 5**, is that the relationship with God of all those who believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been completely changed.

This is the message that we proclaim. God has changed us and our relationship with Himself through His work of grace on the cross of Jesus Christ. Sin separates man from God and His blessing. Great changes are necessary in man if he

is ever going to be liberated from his sad and miserable condition of sin. These changes are beyond man's ability to bring about. The message of the Gospel is that God has already made all the necessary changes to restore man to fellowship with Himself through the work of the cross. The provision has been made for everyone but is only a reality for those who are "*in Christ.*"

The Holy Spirit uses various terms in the Bible to illustrate these changes in the believer that occur when he receives and believes the word of reconciliation. All of these changes become real and personal in the individual the moment and the instant in which He accepts Jesus as his Savior. Nevertheless, these various terms are employed to emphasize different aspects of the changes that God has brought about in us and for us in order to change our relationship with Himself.

In this article we are going to briefly study four of these terms that are used to describe our salvation that we have in Christ. With each term we will notice how it indicates some change that God has made in us or for us that allows us to enjoy sweet and loving fellowship with Himself. We will also notice that "*all these things are from God.*" All is by His grace. None of these changes are brought about by human effort.

These terms and their themes are very complex, and the theologians have much to say

about their meaning. We should always, without a doubt, desire to understand more and more about the depths of the meaning of these glorious works of the cross, but for the moment let's consider them with the simplicity of looking at them as a change that God has brought about for the purpose of restoring us to fellowship with Himself. The four terms that we will consider in this article are: justification, regeneration, sanctification and redemption.

Justification is a work of the cross that indicates a change in our position or acceptance before the Righteous judge. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23 NAS* This was our position outside of Christ. All of mankind stands guilty and condemned in the presence of a holy God. But, for all those who have put their faith in Jesus, God has changed our position before Himself. Read the letter to the **Romans**, especially *chapters four* and *five*. The righteous judge declares us to be righteous, guiltless and without offence in Jesus who's righteousness is counted as our own. *“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.” Romans 5:1, 2 NAS* Our position before the judge has been completely changed. He now sees us in Christ

who is our Substitute and our Representative. Our position is one of grace, peace, acceptance and blessing. What an enormous change! For those “*in Christ*” the work of justification changes God's throne from a throne of wrath to a throne of grace.

In *Titus 3:3 - 7* we read of the “*washing of regeneration.*” **Regeneration** speaks of a change in our nature. The word means literally “to be born again.” Every human being is born with the fallen, sinful nature of their father, Adam. This nature is described in the Bible and is openly manifested in the lives of men as one that is full of all that is offensive to God. All who live according to this nature live only to please themselves and yet the irony of it is, in doing so, they destroy themselves physically, emotionally and spiritually. In the old nature there is nothing found that is good or pleasing to God. But upon being saved, the believer receives a new nature and the old one is to be considered by faith as crucified with Christ.

“*For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable...*” **I Peter 1:23 NAS** This nature is the very life of Christ. It is characterized by all that pleases God. We are made “*partakers of the divine nature,*” as Peter says in **II Peter 1:4**. It is a nature of love that is constantly seeking the good of others. It is a nature that leads to all that is eternal. This

glorious change delivers us from a life of constant ruin and eternal loss and leads us into a life of victory and reward. Without this miracle of regeneration it would be impossible for us to be called children of God. But thank God, we've been changed; we've been born again!

Our **sanctification** by faith provided by God in Christ denotes a change in our usefulness to God. The word means "to set apart for a special use." In **Romans 3:9 - 18** we have a description of man outside of Christ. In that description we read these, words: "*All have turned aside, together they have become useless.*" **NAS** What a sad state that the Creator has to declare that His creature has made itself completely useless!

God sees nothing in unregenerated man that can bring Him pleasure or glory. But we read in **II Thessalonians 2:13 - 17** of a great change that is brought about through the work of sanctification. We are told that we have been chosen by God to gain His glory and that He is able to establish us in every good work and word. We are changed from useless creatures to chosen instruments to bring glory to God and to fulfill His glorious and eternal will on this earth! Oh, glorious grace!

Redemption is a term that speaks of a change of ownership. "*For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.*" **Romans 7:14 NAS** Sin is a cruel master that

robs men of hope and leaves them only with pain, suffering and condemnation. Satan also is a cruel task master to those who are enslaved to sin. Satan comes only to steal, kill and destroy. (***John 10:10***) But Jesus, by His own blood, (***Revelation 5:9***) bought us out of and freed us from slavery to sin. We no longer have to live a life of fear and misery because of the chains of sin. We have been bought with a price. We belong to God in Christ. We have been translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light and life. God is our Father. Jesus is our loving Lord. In this new realm, under our new owner, we are given life, prosperity and inheritance. We now can enjoy a glorious liberty that we had never known before. We now have liberty to serve God in love and to enjoy all the glorious benefits that go along with such service.

I rejoice in the truth of redemption. What joy and peace are found in knowing that we have had a change in masters, from a cruel one to a loving one!

Glory to God! We have been changed completely! We are new creatures in Christ, reconciled to God by His boundless grace!



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