

THE NEW BIRTH AND SALVATION

by Denis G Clark

INTRODUCTION

Evangelism has emphasised so strongly those things which affect the new birth, that in Evangelical circles, the term "new birth" and salvation have become virtually synonymous. If the question is posed, "Are you saved?", the answer will almost assuredly refer to having had a new birth experience. The experience is taken as the evidence of possessing eternal life. In this paper it is proposed to define both the new birth, and the evidences of it, and also to define salvation, and the evidences for it also.

It should be a matter of elementary basics that without the new birth, or birth from above, there can be no entrance into the eternal kingdom. But let it be understood at the outset that the new birth itself is **not** eternal life, but the only entrance to eternal life. Even in the physical sense, we are living a **life** not a birth. However, whoever possessed life without being born? The evidence of present physical life is not proved by the production of a birth certificate, for the person may have long since died. The person must be seen to be alive. So it is with regard to eternal life. That we were born of the Holy Spirit is an insufficient evidence of possessing eternal life at a later date. That will be proved by those indisputable evidences of being alive, and even alive abundantly, as Jesus said. These things will all be closely examined in this paper.

THE NEW BIRTH

We could hardly begin elsewhere than in John chapter 3, where the subject is taken up very strongly in the interview Nicodemus had with our Lord Jesus. Jesus told this learned man in verse 5 that two births were essential, namely, to be born of water and of the Spirit. There is little difficulty in understanding what it means to be born "of the Spirit" for this whole wonderful process must be initiated by and completed by the Holy Spirit. We also know from 1 Peter 1:23 that the Holy Spirit does not use human seed to accomplish this, for this birth is not of blood, but He uses the seed of God, the Word of God, and this does not mean any haphazard text, but the express Word of God to the seeker. Is this what the "water" is in John 3:5? Many have thought so. I suppose the allegory can be tolerated. Many think it refers to baptism, but I find no hope of sustaining this attitude from the scriptures. Note that Jesus said "of water". We are nowhere instructed to get baptised so as to be born again, but rather to be baptised because we **are** saved. The strongest word ever given in this connection is found in Paul's testimony to the Jews in Acts 22, where he says he was told to arise and be baptised to have his sins washed away as he called on the Lord's name (v16). But washing sins away can hardly be thought to be synonymous with the impartation of new life.

If we take a closer look at the context we shall see that Jesus and Nicodemus were talking about physical and spiritual birth. Nicodemus had just asked the question about repeating his own physical birth. Jesus then made this statement and followed it up by saying, flesh gives birth to flesh, and Spirit gives birth to spirit (Jn 3:6). Did Jesus mean that "to be born of water" means the natural birth? You only have to remember firstly that the biggest part of our human flesh is composed of water, and

also consider the part played by water in the natural birth, and this view becomes very feasible: "of water". And is it not true that if we shall ever enter the eternal kingdom, we have to be born as human beings first. Otherwise, like caterpillars that need a second birth to become butterflies, we shall never have the opportunity of second birth.

Preparation for spiritual birth - 1) repentance

How does one prepare for this spiritual birth? Peter told his hearers in Acts 3:19: "Repent and be converted" (or turn to God) "so that He will wipe away your sins." There must be a change of attitude and change of direction. It goes without saying that this would never happen to the self-satisfied or the self-righteous. Where there is no sense of need, there is not likely to be any desire to be saved. The work of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin and righteousness and of judgement.

As we watch the publican in the shadows of the synagogue (Luke 18:9-14) we see these things overtake him. As he sees his own filthy heart, and then measures it against God's righteousness, it takes little to convince him that he is under divine judgement. There is wrung from his agonised heart, therefore, these words: "*O God, be merciful to me a sinner*" (Luke 18:13). There is no sign of these things in that self-righteous Pharisee standing in the same synagogue, who is engaged in the foolish pastime of measuring himself with other men, and especially that publican. Obsessed with his own righteousness, there is no call for salvation, and so he returns home unjustified. Should God forgive a sinner just because Christ died for his sins? God was certainly deaf to the words of that Pharisee. But when the publican showed he was sorry for what he had done, and what he was, God's ears were wide open. This was also the difference between Cain and Abel (Gen 4:3- 5). The sacrifice avails nothing if the attitude is not that of repentance. Without repentance we never get on God's wavelength.

Preparation for spiritual birth - 2) response to God's promises

Then there follows the positive side: the response to God's promises. Lots of misunderstandings occur here.

The hyper-Calvinist feels it is now all up to God, forgetting that God has commanded him to seek if he is ever to find, to knock if he is ever to have it opened to him. God having told Joshua that He had awarded him the land of promise, then commanded him to go and get his feet on that land (Josh 1:2-3). But woe to Joshua if he had tried to do it before God had given it to him to possess.

This brings us to the hyper-Arminian who feels that he can take any promise at any time and make God respond to it. But God stated that no one can come to the Son until the Father draws him (John 6:44). Let the promise grabber take good note of those words, and let those who are lazy in responding beware that their hour of opportunity does not pass them by.

We are not saved **by** faith. Paul told the Ephesians in Chapter 2, verses 8-9: "*For it is by God's grace that you have been saved **through** faith. It is not your own doing but God's gift. There is nothing here to boast of, since it is not the result of your own efforts.*" We do better to pass between these two extremes of Calvinism and Arminianism and "*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye 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; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." You will find that of course in Isaiah 55:6-7 (AV).

Proofs of the New Birth - 1) Obedience

Fine, but when do I know that I am born again? First comes obedience, for God gives his Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32), and second comes the witness.

Let us examine a few verses which have to do with obedience. Take Romans 10:9, which the chorus writer said is a favourite verse of mine. I share his sentiments. It reads, *"If you declare with your lips, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* Far from being an automatic formula to be extracted from the seeker, it is the way for him to walk. Note the future tense used at the end: "you **will be** saved". We know that people have made this confession aloud and believed it at the time, but were not born again. But it is a command, and should be viewed as such. Therefore, the seeker should understand that he must get on the way by confessing openly and believing inwardly, thus doing his part, while God will assuredly do His part in due time.

The time will probably depend on whole-hearted repentance and believing. It was not long for the Philippian gaoler, who displayed tremendous sincerity, and seeking God when he fell at the apostles' feet saying, *"What must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:30). Paul's reply was straight from God, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"*. Again the future tense is used, but we know what transpired before dawn. But it would be fruitless to apply the same words to a half-hearted seeker, and then try to persuade him that he was saved. No, better point him to a future meeting with God, sooner or later, depending on how he seeks God.

Proofs of the New Birth - 2) Witness of the Word

It is important to understand the obedience factor, for it is the highway to the witness factor, which we will deal with now. John Wesley, when told by any that they were saved, usually asked the question, "Ah, but do you have the witness?" If we will prove any case conclusively, we need two witnesses, and God agreed with us in Old Testament Law for court cases. We will know that God has saved us when we have the double witness within us of the Word and the Spirit.

When we have the witness of the Word, it is not that we have found a convenient text, but that, if you like, that the text has found us. I mean, God has spoken directly to us through some part of his Word, or by unshakeable conviction, or prophecy from Himself that we have passed from death to life. We know it because God has said it, not to a Philippian gaoler, but said it to us.

Someone may protest, and ask how we can know that our sins are forgiven, and that God has saved us, for only God can say such things. We reply, "He has said it, said it personally to us. To deny it would be to deny Him." *"These things are written"*, says John, in the fifth chapter of his first letter, *"that you may know that you have eternal life, and this life is ours in His Son"*. This is the first witness.

Proofs of the New Birth - 3) Witness of the Spirit

The second is the witness of the Holy Spirit. Here are some extracts from Romans 8, verse 9 onwards: *"But you do not live as your human nature tells you, you live as the Spirit tells you to, if in fact God's Spirit lives in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. So then, my brothers, we have an obligation, but not to live as our human nature wants us to. For if you live according to your human nature you are going to die, but if by the Spirit you kill your sinful actions you will live. Those who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons, for the Spirit that God has given you does not make you a slave and cause you to be afraid. Instead the Spirit makes you God's sons, and by the Spirit's power we cry to God, 'Father, my Father'. God's Spirit joins Himself to our spirit to declare that we are God's children."*

These are profound yet simple statements. We know that when the Spirit of God's Son enters us, for we spontaneously cry out in prayer, "Father". That alone tells me He is the Spirit of the Son, but that he has come into me and cries this through me, proves that he has made me a son of God also, else it were a lie. This, and this alone, is the witness of the Spirit. An assurance or feeling of certainty could be psychological, but the witness of the Spirit is not psychological, nor is the witness of the Word.

One more scripture on this, which will make a way for us to proceed. It is in Hebrews 10:15-16, "For the Holy Spirit also gives us His witness. First he says, *"This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts and I will write them on their minds"*, and then He says *"I will not remember their sins and wicked deeds any longer."* Now if the Lord has written his Law in the believer's heart and on his mind, then it will issue forth in a new demonstration of living. How kind of God to impute the righteousness of His Son to us, but this must now be imparted to us also. Jesus was so named by the angel, because He would save his people **from** their sins, not **in** their sins (Matt 1:21).

PROOFS OF THE NEW LIFE

What then are the proofs of new life? We shall make a study of ten proofs, and while we do it, it would be wise to do what the apostle said, *"Put yourselves to the test, and judge yourselves to find out whether you are living in faith. Surely you know that Christ Jesus is in you, unless you have completely failed"* (2 Cor 13:5). Paul then goes on to say, *"I trust you will know that we are not failures"*. Let us tabulate these proofs for convenience:

Proofs of the New Life - 1) Doing the Will of God.

After declaring what elements make up what he calls the world, and showing that we cannot have both the love of world and the love of the Father at the same time, John says in 1 John 2:17, *"The world and everything in it that men desire is passing away, but he who does what God wants (the Authorised Version says "the will of God") lives for ever"*. With this we should also read one of the last things Jesus said in His sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 7:21: *"Not every person who calls me 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to"*. These people who had apparently come into the kingdom knowing Romans 10:9, could also make claim to some pretty hefty proofs, for Jesus continued, *"When that day comes, many will say to me 'Lord, Lord, in your name we prophesied, by your name we drove out many demons, and performed many miracles'"*. There are not all that many professing Christians who can claim these things. However, notice what Jesus said He will say in reply to their claim, *"Then I will say to them, 'I never*

knew you, away from Me, you evil doers." It comes natural to human beings to cling to the spectacular as proof of reality. I suppose this is why so many are being deceived into spiritism these days. But not everything supernatural is divine. No, God looks for a much more convincing proof.

If there has been genuine repentance and submission to God, then it must evidence itself in a life that goes on doing (doeth) God's will (Matt 7:21). And should this not be expected? When Jesus came into this world as a human being, he stated, *"Here I am, O God, to do what you want me to do"* (Heb 10:9). If we claim that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith, then the least we should expect is that there is a new power working in us which does the will of God. There is no power to do this prior to our new birth, that's certain. And if this new power is not operating, the condition speaks for itself, and needs urgent attention.

Do you remember what happened when Solomon was made king? His older brother Adonijah tried to supplant him, but failed (1 Kings 1). Realising he had committed a sin punishable by death, he fled to the altar to which he clung and sought mercy. Solomon sent for him, forgave him, but conditioned that pardon on his continuing to show himself a worthy man. In other words, the slightest sign of the old rebellion would cost him his life. All went well for a time, but Adonijah betrayed his unconquered rebellion by making a bid for the Shunnamite girl, Abishag, whom Solomon so desired himself (1 Kings 2:13-). This bid cost him his life, and the pardon was cancelled.

A similar thing happened to Shimei, whose pardon was conditioned by his remaining in the city. He failed to keep the condition, and it was a very small condition, but when he crossed the river and chased after his servants that had left him, that act showed his true heart, and spelled out his death (1 Kings 2:36-46).

The proof that we have received a new heart is seen in that the lives we now live are lived under the direction of God. Let us not forget what happened to Lot's wife (Luke 17:32), nor what happened to Judas Iscariot.

Proofs of the New Life - 2) Knowing God.

In that great prayer of Jesus to His Father in John 17, He said in verse 3, *"And this is eternal life, for men to know You the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ Whom You sent."* Along with that we should study the promise, given through Jeremiah in Jer 24:7, *"And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."*

To know about God is one thing, but to know Him personally is quite another. If we stood in the throng outside Buckingham Palace, having studied the life and work of Queen Elizabeth II, so that we knew more about her than even the Palace Guards, this would not gain us an entrance to the Palace when she appeared on the balcony. But if we had somehow come to know her as a personal friend, provided she recognised us in the crowd, we would very likely be invited into the Palace. God puts the same condition upon our entrance into the eternal kingdom. Our passport to heaven is not stamped by an impartial righteous authority or church leader, but stamped by the knowledge of Himself.

To evaluate what this knowledge means, we need to observe various ways in which this knowledge reveals itself. For example, Jesus said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall **make** you free."* (John 8:32). Remember here, that He, Jesus, is the Truth. Anyone claiming knowledge of Jesus therefore, must be able to show that He has been **made** free. Made free is different from being set free, as some of the modern translations render it. For example, when an alcoholic is set free from a term in prison, he may fall again into drunkenness at the first pub which he finds he can't pass by. But if that alcoholic had found Christ in the prison, and been **made** free from his alcoholism, the story would be very different. To be set free only indicates a change of circumstances, whereas being made free indicates a change of heart. This is the new heart which Ezekiel promised God would give in Ezek 36:26, where he goes on to promise in verse 28, *"that ye shall be my people, and I will be your God"*. This is the same thing promised by what we read in Jeremiah, and that same phrase must bring back to your memory the statement in 2 Cor 6:16, where the same words are recorded. This time it is given to those who are not unequally yoked to unbelievers, and who separate themselves from uncleanness. This means that those who know God find their lives and behaviour changed, and also their preference for fellowship with God's own people. By the way, this does not mean that someone who knows the Lord should therefore leave an unsaved marriage partner, as 1 Corinthians 7 fully explains.

We may link here the words of Jesus in John 10:27, *"My sheep listen to my voice because they **know** it. I know them and they follow me."* This mutual knowledge is the very corner-stone of true Christian experience, which becomes even more significant when we turn to John 14. In John 14:17, Jesus told his disciples, *"Even the Spirit of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but You know Him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."* That was fulfilled in the Upper room when Jesus breathed the Spirit into them and they received new life. John 14:20, *"at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you."*

There are a host of scriptures to which we could turn to further our study, but we shall choose a few from John's first epistle, where he seems to specialise on this subject. Have a look at 1 John 2:3: *"hereby do we know that we know Him if keep his commandments"*, and then verse 5, *"Who so keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected, hereby **know** we that we are in Him"*. 1 John 3:14: *"we **know** that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren."* In 1 John 4:7-8: *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God, and **knows** God. Whoever doesn't love God does not know God because God is love."* 1 John 5:2, *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments."* And finally 1 John 5:20, *"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."* Remember we are not now defining a newly converted babe in Christ, but looking for the evidence that the life received in birth has in fact become a reality.

Proofs of the New Life - 3) He that has the Son of God.

We take this third proof of eternal life from 1 John 5:11-13: *"This then is the witness. God has given us eternal life, and this life is ours in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life. Whoever does not have the Son does not have life. I write you this so that you*

may know that you have eternal life." This seems to show that we do not receive any eternal life apart from Him. The Son is the possessor of this life, as He himself said in John 5:26, *"even as the Father is Himself the source of life, in the same way He has made His Son to be the source of life."* So it is not a question of us having life, as much as it is a question of having the Son, in Whom **is** this life. If we have Him, then we have life.

Right, the only question now is, How do you know when you have the Son? That is quickly and distinctly answered by Galatians 4:6, *"to show that you are His sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries 'Father, my Father'."* The miracle is that He does not dwell in the believer as a distinct entity, but as part of the believer. We should note that.

Proofs of the New Life - 4) Hearing and believing.

Hearing and believing, that is, in the continuous sense. We refer to that great pronouncement in John 5:24, *"Verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."* I purposely cited the old AV so that we do not miss that continuous verb. Heareth and believeth do not signify a crisis experience, but a continual power.

Someone asked a friend of mine if he believed in the eternal security of the believer. "Yes", responded my friend, "if he goes on believing." Once again, let it be said that we are living a **life** not a birth. I can understand that people want what they call an eternal security doctrine, if they are relying on their new birth experience to get them to heaven, but the necessity for such a doctrine becomes redundant with the present enjoyment of life. We must not trust an experience, nor a doctrine, but a Saviour.

If the believer craves security, let him find it in the Saviour Himself, instead of clinging desperately to such scriptures as, *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never die, and no one can snatch them away from me"*. That is John 10:28 of course. Let those who cling to this statement realise they would be safer clinging to the Saviour.

Let them also realise that such a statement is not conclusive, but is to be seen in its setting along with other great statements such as that at 2 Peter 2:20, which says, *"For if men have escaped from the deadly forces of the world through their **knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and then are again caught by them and defeated, such men are in worse condition at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then turn away from the sacred command that was given them."* Hence the solemn warning of Hebrews 3:6 and 14, which read as follows: *"But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house are we, **if** we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end"*, and, *"For we are made partakers of Christ **if** we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."* Some complain that this reduces salvation through faith to salvation by works: rather it shows us salvation that works.

Proofs of the New Life - 5) Fruit-bearing.

A very practical measurement was given by Jesus in John 15:8, which reads, *"This is how my Father's glory is shown, by your bearing much fruit, and in this way you become my disciples."* In other words, if the man who trusts God is *"like a tree planted by the waters"*, as Jeremiah said (Jer 17:8), then the genuineness of that tree will be proved by the fruit it bears (Matt 7:20). That is, if we can come to a place of faith, and claim that Christ dwells in us, His life could hardly be barren. Therefore, even though we hesitate to prove truth by logic, it only remains to say that if His life in me is **not** fruitful, something must be very radically wrong.

This is surely where the Lord's teaching about abiding in the Vine in John 15 takes on such significance: let us read it. John 15:4: *"remain in union with me, and I will remain in union with you. Unless you remain in me, you cannot bear fruit, just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains in the vine. I am the Vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in Me and I in Him will bear much fruit, for you can do nothing without Me. Whoever does not remain in Me is thrown out like a branch and dries up. Such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire where they are burned."* Does this only refer to our testimony? Some think so. It is wiser not to take such a chance. Can we be Christians without becoming disciples? How do I know Christ dwells in me, if there is no proof of that by His life being fruitful through me?

Proofs of the New Life - 6) The end of sin's dominion.

Now we move closer in. Examine 1 John 3:9-10, *"Whoever is a child of God does not continue to sin, because God's very nature is in him, and because God is his Father, he is not able to continue to sin. Here is the clear difference between God's children and the devil's children. Anyone who does not do what is right, or does not love his brother is not God's child"*. We had better add now verse 8, *"Whoever continues to sin belongs to the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this very reason, to destroy the devil's works."*

Before sinking into despair, please note the continuous aspect of the verb again. The above scriptures do not mean a true believer will never commit a sin, and this is borne out by 1 John 2:1, which tells us what to do **when** we sin, and to whom to go, to Jesus the Advocate. But it does mean that the dominion of sin over our life will be broken. This is enunciated for us in Romans 6:14, *"For sin must not rule over you. You do not live under law, but under God's grace."*

Let me illustrate. If an alcoholic comes to Christ, proof of his salvation, amongst other things, will be seen in his liberation from the power of alcoholism. He may commit certain individual sins, and confess and forsake them, thus finding mercy, but if he continues in alcoholism what has he been saved from? The same applies to hate, and other less obvious yet equally destructive sins.

Proofs of the New Life - 7) Loving other Christians.

If number 6) dealt with a negative, this heading brings out the positive. We read in 1 John 3:13-14, *"So do not be surprised, my brothers, if the people of the world hate you. We know that we have left death and come into life. We know it because we love our brothers. Whoever does not love is still in death."* Verse 16 explains, *"This is how we know what love is, Christ gave His life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for our brothers."* If the Christian life was to be measured only by deliverance from sin, we could serve our eternal interest best by seclusion in an existence cut off from

sinner and worldliness. But this is not **God's** design. We are to bring forth the Holy Spirit's fruit in a life that can easily be expressed in one word, love.

That love must begin towards other believers. This denies denominational barriers, and recognises my brother in Christ, no matter how hamstrung he may be by human restrictions. *"Our fellowship"*, says John, *"is with the Father and with His son Jesus Christ."* (1 John 1:3) What a basis. But as Peter tells us in his second letter, chapter 1, upon the foundation of divine faith in the believers life must be added seven great things, beginning with virtue. The sixth is *"love for the brethren"*, capped finally by *"love for all"*. Let us beware that our desire for separation does not lead us down the blind alley of isolation.

Proofs of the New Life - 8) Keeping His Commandments.

Again we turn to what John has written in his first epistle, 1 John 2:3: *"if we obey God's commands then we are sure that we know Him. If some one says 'I do know Him' but does not obey his commands, such a person is a liar and there is no truth in him. But he who obeys his word is one whose love for God has really been made perfect. This is how we can be sure that we live in God. He that says that he lives in God should live just as Jesus Christ did."*

What commands is John referring to? Does he mean the Ten Commandments? I hardly think so, for these were given to show how far we were from God, and now the fruit of the Spirit has lifted us above these laws. Perhaps John answers his own definition in 1 John 3:23, *"This is what He commands, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as Christ commanded us. Whoever obeys God's commands, lives in God, and God lives in Him. And this is how we know that God lives in us. We know it because of the Spirit He has given us."*

Let Acts 5:32 round that off with these words, *"We are witnesses to these things, we and the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to those who obey Him."* God looks for submission, not subjugation, and there is no place in His kingdom for rebels who continue in their rebellion. Subjugation crushes and frustrates, whereas submission liberates and fulfils, and this is God's plan for us.

Proofs of the New Life - 9) Led of the Spirit.

Can this also be a proof of eternal life? Is it not rather only a sign of spiritual maturity? Well, look at Romans 8:14, *"Those who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons, for the Spirit that God has given you does not make you a slave and cause you to be afraid, instead the Spirit makes you God's sons, and by the Spirit's power we cry to God, 'Father, my Father'."* This is where being led and directed by the living Spirit is superior to being guided by that old Law. Faith and obedience go hand in hand, and are joined together like siamese twins, never to be separated.

Galatians 5:18 triumphantly declares, *"if the Spirit leads you, then you are not subject to the Law."* The basis for this great statement was understood from verse 16, *"Let the Spirit direct your lives, and do not satisfy the desires of the human nature, for what our human nature wants is opposed to what the Spirit wants, and what the Spirit wants is opposed to what human nature wants."* The two are enemies, and this means that you cannot do what you want to do, and struggling to obey the Ten

Commandments, with will-power only, ends in defeat, but obedience through faith to what the Spirit says is our very life-line.

Proofs of the New Life - 10) Overcoming.

This part sums up the whole matter, and brings together the whole picture and final climax of our salvation. We begin with Revelation 21:7, "*He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*" Looks like we have now completed the circle, doesn't it. A modern version says, "*Whoever wins the victory will receive this from Me, I will be his God, and he will be my son.*" That makes the issue of eternal life and the proof of it even more clear. The whole book of Revelation only seems to hold out hope for those who overcome. So we had better find out what is involved in overcoming.

Does all this mean that God promises us eternal life at the beginning, even making us partakers in it, yet only confirms it at the end? It is like what God did with Abraham, the father of the faithful. At the very commencement God made him a full promise (Gen 12:1-3), but it was only after the climax over offering up Isaac, his last hope, that God confirmed the promise, and said because you have done this thing, I will (Gen 22:16-18). Abraham faced a big battle, but overcame, and, "*he that endures to the end shall be saved*".

The importance of overcoming is highlighted in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, in the messages to the angels of the seven churches. In each case the promise is to those who overcome. In each case the overcomers are given a definition of eternal salvation. Come briefly and we will see.

Revelation 2:7, "*To those who have won the victory, I will give the right to eat the fruit of the tree of life that grows in the garden of God.*" Who is that tree? This is our salvation.

Revelation 2:11, "*Those who win the Victory will not be hurt from the second death.*" This is what we have been saved from.

Revelation 2:17, "*To those who have won the victory, I will give some of the hidden manna.*" Is this any different from saying, "*Whoever eats of this bread shall never die*"?

And in Revelation 2:26, "*To those who win the victory, who continue to do what I want until the very end, I will give the same authority which I received from my Father. I will give him authority over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron.*" And is not this what we have been saved to? Are not those who are saved destined to reign with Him?

Revelation 3:5, "*Those who win the victory will be clothed like this in white, and I will not remove their names from the book of the living.*" And is this not the robe of righteousness, or the garment of salvation, the righteousness of saints, possessed by the redeemed?

In Revelation 3:12, "*I will make him who is victorious a pillar in the temple of my God and He will never leave it again. I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which will come down from heaven from God. I will also write on him my new name.*" Are these terms of the Temple and

the New Jerusalem not synonymous with the church of the living God into which the redeemed are built as lively stones?

And then finally Revelation 3:21, *"To those who win the victory I will give the right to sit by me on my throne, just as I have been victorious and now sit by my Father on his throne."* Again, are not the redeemed destined to sit with him just there, reigning with him? Where was Jesus victorious? In exactly the same place where we are to be victorious, on this earth, surrounded by the three enemies of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

CONCLUSION

Now let us bring this study to an end by reading from 1 John 2:14, *"I write to you children"* (that is those newly born) *"because you know the Father,"* (that is where salvation begins), *"I write to you fathers"* (those who are well established now in Christ), *"because you **know Him who has existed from the beginning**"*. Remember, *"that they may know you": this is eternal life.* The children know him by witness, the old men know Him by experience of keeping His commandments. And in between, *"I write to you young men"*, (that is those in the heat of the battle), *"because you are strong, the Word of God lives in you, and you have defeated that Evil One."* Overcomers.

This paper presents Denis G Clark's teaching on the difference between the New Birth and Salvation in the most condensed and literary form he ever produced. It is a transcript of a lecture prepared as a tape recorded lecture for the "Cassette Bible College" (Foundation lectures F1). The body of the text is unaltered, only the headings paragraphing, punctuation etc. have been provided by the editor (R H Johnston).

This series of notes provide a basic treatment of the topic, to stimulate personal bible study. Every effort has been made to be accurate, but the reader should test everything (Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 5:21). Errors, or queries which are unresolved after consulting the LORD, should be referred to the editor: R H Johnston.

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