

The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation

Lesson 9. Born Again: The Day You Are Justified; The Beginning of Being Sanctified; The Journey To Your Salvation (De-Hellenizing Mental Muck)

You Must Be Born Again

“Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again... I tell you the truth, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:3,5).

From the Hebraic perspective of the Newer Testament, being born again—that is, experiencing spiritual rebirth—was the point at which you shift from religious practice (or *no* practice) and put your **full trust and reliance** in Jesus as your Sin-bearer, your Savior and Lord of your life. Jesus endorsed this break with religious form and practice which encompassed a myriad of manmade traditions. These heavy burdens of added-on religious requirements weighed down the Jews of His day, as Jesus censured the law experts (Luke 11:46). He emphasized that you *can't confine* the vitality of a responsive and living relationship with God:

“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins” (Mark 2:21,22).

To be “born again” is to trust in Jesus with the obedient trust of *Abraham* in his relationship with God (James 2:23). But trying to trust in Jesus while also relying on following religious tradition to make you acceptable to God only rips each pattern apart, rendering both useless.

What Is Salvation? And When Do You Experience It?

Salvation was understood by the earliest followers of Jesus to occur at the *end* of our earthly pilgrimage. For those who *endure to the end* in their love and obedient trust, our Lord promises, ***“He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before My Father and His angels”*** (Revelation 3:5; see also Matthew 10:22; 24:13). *This* is the moment of salvation!

For your name to be in the Lamb's book of life calls for two essential elements during your life's journey:

Justification—placing your trust in, and *continuing* to trust in, the shed blood of Jesus as full payment for the penalty of your sins. You can *do absolutely nothing* to atone for your sins! Purely by His grace Jesus atoned for your sins by His sacrifice on your behalf on the cross. (See Romans 3:22-26.)

Sanctification—the lifelong purifying process of the Holy Spirit at work in you Who enables you to be increasingly conformed to the nature of Jesus. As you cooperate with Him, throughout your pilgrimage on earth, the Holy Spirit will transform you into the character and motivation of Jesus (2Corinthians 3:18).

In summary, entering into the New Covenant with your Father:

1. Begins with **Justification**—the moment you're born again as you embrace your Father's Covenant through

your trust in the shed blood of Jesus to reconcile you with the Father.

2. Continues as a lifelong process of **Sanctification** in which by grace you become more and more Christ-like as the Spirit works in you.
3. Culminates ultimately in your **Salvation** before the Throne as your name is proclaimed from the Lamb's book of life.

The true Gospel denotes your ongoing pilgrimage in Christ as you *endure to the end*, which is the time of your salvation when you appear before the Lord. A certain parallel associates justification and sanctification with marriage:

Justification is the day you get married, and sanctification is living out your marriage. Marriage must be worked out by you both together in an ongoing manner until the covenant ends when death parts you.

It's important to always remember that *justification* frees you from the penalty of your sins: "*Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him!*" (Romans 5:9). Jesus paid the price as your substitute, the Sinless for the sinful. Accepting the atoning work of His death alone *justifies* you before our Father and *reconciles* you to Him.

In its fullest sense, *sanctification* may be described as a *transformation process* worked in us through the indwelling Spirit:

"Now 'the Lord' in this text means the **Spirit**. And *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom*. So all of us, with faces unveiled, see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord; and we are *being changed into His very image, from one degree of glory to the next, by the Lord, the Spirit*" (2Corinthians 3:17,18, JNT).

This ongoing process is dependent on the mercy and grace of God as we, out of grateful love, press on in *continuing obedience* to live out that which is His purpose and will for our lives:

Therefore, my beloved friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose (Philippians 2:12,13).

Through His Spirit you are being transformed into the character of Jesus. He gives you the determination to persevere no matter the cost (James 1:4). This *love-driven life of obedient trust* is the continuing course for you to undertake with intentional focus until you stand before His Throne and are acknowledged as His own.

To Live In Covenant Is To Live Purposefully

The Older Testament ends with the prophet Malachi pronouncing the judgment of God on those who broke their marriage covenant through divorce. We today need to pay particular attention to the intensity of *our Father's regard* for the sanctity of the marriage covenant despite the proliferation of divorce throughout Christendom:

"The LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the LORD made them one [to live in union]? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. 'I hate divorce,' says

the LORD God of Israel, 'and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,' says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith'" (Malachi 2:14-16).

Notice our Father's distinct purpose for the marriage covenant: "*Because He was seeking **godly** offspring.*" God wasn't just "*making them one*" to produce children. He intended that these children be trained by their parents to walk uprightly in loving service to Him—to be His ambassadors of reconciliation for His Kingdom! (See 2Corinthians 5:20.)

Every covenant that is initiated by our Father entails purposes to be fulfilled by the person who embraces the covenant with Him.

In the Covenant offered to us through Jesus, our Father's purpose for our lives is emphasized in Ephesians 2:8-10:

*"For it is **by grace** you have been saved through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are **God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do**" (see also Matthew 28:18-20).*

Entailed in embracing our Father's Covenant is our responsibility to do the works He's prepared for us. Among these purposeful assignments to bring Him glory is this key command which reflects His heart for *all* people groups:

*"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to obey all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age**" (Matthew 28:18-20).*

Again, offering your life as a living sacrifice to fulfill His plans and purposes through you requires you to keep looking to the Holy Spirit for both guidance and empowerment. When you embrace our Father's Covenant of love in Christ, purposeful responsibilities await you!

- **In your heart, do you have full confidence in the atonement Jesus made to cover over your sins through His shed blood? Or, are you haunted by the sense that you need to do something more to earn your Father's acceptance?**
- **If you claim to belong to the Father through the New Covenant in Christ, how earnestly do you cooperate with and yield to the Spirit in becoming more like Jesus in nature, character, and obedience?**
- **In what ways and by what means have you been determining the purposes and works your Father has prepared in advance for you to do?**