

WHAT BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS ARE

Bud Morris

Born-again Christians are not simply people who have made a decision to clean up their lives and start over. People are born again when they repent of their sinfulness and accept the death of Christ on the cross as the payment for their sins. God not only forgives those who trust in the Lord for their salvation, He actually gives them a new life. They are actually re-born. Here's how it works.

Everyone Needs a Change

The Bible tells us plainly:

There is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God *Romans 3:22-23*

Even when we overcome the temptation to sin, the very fact that we were tempted to sin shows that we are not a whole lot better inside than the people who actually commit the sins. Jesus said:

"Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." *Matthew 5:28*

The minds of these bodies we were born with are actually incapable of pleasing God:

The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. *Romans 8:7-8*

Our sins have brought death on us:

...Death spread to all men, because all sinned... *Romans 5:12*

It is bad enough to realize that our bodies will eventually die, but it is downright terrifying to realize that after our bodies die, our souls will be judged for the sins we have committed.

¹² *And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.* ¹³ *The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.* ¹⁴ *Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.* ¹⁵ *And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Revelation 20:12-15

Being Born Again

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, he said:

"We know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." John 3:2

Nicodemus was right. Jesus had proved that He came from God by the miracles that He had done, but Jesus brought him up short by warning him:

"Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. " John 3:3

Jesus went on to explain that being born again was a spiritual process rather than a physical one. Our natural "fleshly" birth came to us through our parents, but this spiritual birth is given to us by the Holy Spirit of God.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." John 3:6-8

This spiritual re-birth is like the wind. People can tell that it is there, but they can't put a finger on it. Although it changes our attitudes, and therefore our behavior, it does not leave any physical changes on our bodies that mark us as born-again Christians.

As Nicodemus struggled with the concept of being born again, Jesus likened it to an incident that happened to the Israelites as described in Numbers 21:4-9. They had sinned, and God sent poisonous snakes in to punish them. The people repented and asked God to remove the snakes. But instead of removing them, God told Moses to put a brass figure of a snake on a pole. If anyone who had been bitten by one of the snakes would simply come and look at the snake on the pole, he would not die. The snake-bite victims needed to quit trying to save themselves with useless remedies that they hoped would work; and trust God enough to accept the remedy that He had provided for them.

Jesus went on to say:

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:14-15



In other words, Jesus Himself would be hung on the cross as the remedy for the death that we have all brought on ourselves by sinning. If we admit that we are so sinful that we deserve to die for our sins, and believe that Christ died in our place for them, our souls will not die because God gives us a new life that lasts forever. We are born again by repenting of our sins and accepting this new spiritual life from the Holy Spirit of God.

Jesus clarified this by adding,

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Jesus finished the conversation by assuring believers and warning unbelievers:

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18

The Apostle Paul assures those who trust in Christ for their salvation:

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...

Ephesians 2:4-5

Our salvation from sin, death, and eternal punishment, then, is entirely by the grace of God. It does not depend on us trying to clean up our lives and become better people. Rather, we receive a new “Born-again” life by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who made the payment for our sins by dying on the cross in our place.

"By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Ephesians 2:8-9

The New Born-again Life

We become children of God when we receive our new born-again lives from the Holy Spirit.

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. **Beloved, now we are children of God;***

1 John 3:1-2

Our new born-again spirits do not sin because they are as much from God as our bodies are from our earthly parents.

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His (God's) seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

1 John 3:9

The Christian's Struggle

A born-again Christian, then, is a new spiritual being that cannot sin; but he still lives in his old fleshly body that is prone to sin. This leads to the inevitable Christian struggle described by the Apostle Paul in the Book of Romans:

"I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice."

Romans 7:18-19

The new “Born-again” spirit in the Christian wants to do good, but the old selfish body wants self-gratification rather than righteousness. It is not the new self that sins, but the old fleshly self that is part of these bodies of sin.

"Now if I do what I (don't want) to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."

Romans 7:20

Nevertheless, the struggle was so severe within the Apostle Paul, that he continued:

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

Romans 7:24

The Scriptural Solution to the Christian's Struggle

After asking who would deliver him from this body of death, the Apostle Paul exclaimed:

"I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Romans 7:25

In the long run, these sinful bodies are going to be changed into bodies like Christ's body:

Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body...

Philippians 3:20-21

The problem is, we need to experience a change in our sinful behaviors now, while we are still in these sinful old bodies. The solution for this is that since Christ died in our place, we are to consider ourselves dead to sin with the crucified Christ, and alive to God with the resurrected Christ.

If One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Christian baptism exemplifies this for us:

As many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3-4

In baptism, as we go down under the water we are symbolically being buried with Christ. But we are not left under the water. We are also pictured as raised with Him as we come up out of the water. Further down in this chapter we read:

The death that He (Christ) died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you...

Romans 6:10-14

Christians are to ignore every temptation to sin by considering the sinful mind of our fleshly bodies as already be dead to sin and alive to God, even though our bodies have not actually been changed as yet. They will be!

Born-again Christians, then, are people that have received new spiritual lives from God by repenting of their sins and accepting the death of Christ as the payment for those sins. Their new lives cannot sin, but they are still trapped in bodies that are prone to sin. They get the victory over sin in their lives to the extent that they consider themselves dead to sin with the Christ who died in their place, and alive to God with the resurrected Christ. Thankfully, when the Lord comes, their fleshly bodies will be changed into ones that cannot be corrupted by sin.

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

1 Corinthians 15:51-54