

FIVE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT BELIEVING IN ETERNAL LIFE

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"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. John 10:28 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God. I John 3:2

Over the years, some of us have been bombarded by some who could not see eternal life, with reasons why this is such a damnable and devilish doctrine. The chief reason and ultimately the foundation for all other reasons is they say "it encourages men to live after the flesh, to give themselves into the hand of the enemy because there is no fear of eternal punishment." Their idea is that you must hold fear of hell in front of Christians as a deterrent from wickedness. In view of the above scripture and at least 25 references to eternal life or everlasting life in the four gospels alone, we would emphasize that the doctrine of eternal life is most powerfully taught by Christ and those who followed Him. The teaching is of God and DOES NOT encourage men to walk after the flesh. We realize that many believers and nonbelievers of eternal life do walk after the flesh, but it is not because of the teaching. James tells us "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man." The next verse puts responsibility squarely where it belongs. "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust." Jas. 1:13-14.

The threat of hell deters neither the sinner nor the carnal Christian from going his own way. Jesus expressed this in Luke 16 when He told of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man, who was tormented in the flame; verse 24, requested that Lazarus be sent back from the dead "to his father's house to testify unto them lest they come into this place of torment": vs.27-28. That request was refused as Abraham said "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." v. 31. In reality, men cannot conceive of the awfulness of hell and even though we read accounts of some who received glimpses of it's torment on their death beds, as they screamed in terror and pulled out their hair, they did not repent. As Abraham said, if they do not listen to God's Word nothing else will persuade them. The purpose of this article is not simply to announce and expound on all the scriptures teaching eternal life just for the sake of proving a point, but to point out that while some list the so called evils of this teaching, has anyone ever considered that there are very serious consequences to NOT believing eternal life?

First, the doctrine of eternal life meets a very basic and fundamental need of all humanity -- SECURITY. There are many scriptures which attest to the fact that man needs to feel secure. We see from scripture that there are some who searched for it. There are those who express the joy of finding it, and some who manifest depression and anxiety when it eludes them. David found joy in Psa. 40 because, "He hath brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings". He had found the solid footing which is so desperately required by all men.

Jesus ministered to this same need and used the same illustration in the parable found in Matt. 7:24-29. Though these two houses were exposed to the same bitter winds and rains of adversity and destruction, the house built on the Rock stood firm. His meaning is clear but even in that day, "the people were astonished at His doctrine" v.28. He was in reality appealing to their need of security. Only the foolish would ignore this God given need and build on something which is not solid and secure. Today it is amazing how some can sing with such assurance, "He brought me out of the miry clay, He set my feet on the Rock to STAY", and then declare that they do not believe in eternal life.

This same place of safety is further illustrated in Matt. 23:37. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem thou that killest the prophets how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not." A hen gathers her young under her wings for the express purpose of protecting them and giving them a place of refuge and safety. Men need this same security as we read in Psa. 17:8, "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings" and again, Psa. 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength". Psa. 9:9 declares, "The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble". Finally, Psa. 46:7 says, "The God of Jacob is our refuge". There are also those of the New Testament who searched for security. The rich young ruler who came to Jesus was searching for eternal life. You may recall that even though this man had done everything in his own power and gone the limit as far as the works of the law

are concerned, ("all these have I kept from my youth up", Lk. 18:21), yet he was still not satisfied; he was not standing on solid ground. If God wants to hold men in fear, then this young man should have been commended by Jesus. He should have said, "Your fear is exactly the way you should feel, just keep on striving". Instead, Jesus exhorted him to give away the riches in which he trusted and follow Him. Jesus alone could give him the security he longed for.

All of these citations show to us man's tremendous need and search for security, and we can readily see how he demonstrates it even from infancy. The newborn child shows it as he cries almost incessantly until he is secure in the arms of his mother. We see it manifest by the billions of dollars which are spent on insurance year after year as men strive for financial security. Nations spend more multiplied billions to secure themselves from the attacks of other nations. It crops up again as men search for job security oftentimes taking jobs which pay lower wages. The list could go on and on because, in reality, human beings search for security in every area of their lives. They need something that is steadfast and unchangeable, a veritable Rock on which to stand. What happens when they cannot for some reason achieve that place of contentment? David describes this terrible condition in Psa. 69. While this Psa. is an apt description of Jesus' feelings as He hung on the Cross, laboring under the guilt of our sins, it is also the expression of the psalmist's own misery. It is the voice of one who could find no solid standing and place of security. "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am come into deep water where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying." Society today is a graphic illustration of this same condition. Consider the frustrations, fear, anxiety, and bitterness of children when they do not have the rest and security of a happy home because their parents are on the verge of a divorce or have already obtained one. Children need the security of a solid relationship between their parents and when they do not have it, there are problems. Just look around at the tragedy which prevails across our land today because of broken homes. Some parents try to promote a lie of the devil which says, "My children are mature and they can handle it, but many, many children are becoming emotionally crippled because this very basic need is not being met by their parents. They, too, are sinking in deep mire, where there is no standing. They have no sense of direction. They do not know where to put their foot next, because their entire world has collapsed around them. Where is their rock? What can they depend on? In whom can they confide? Where can they go when the storms are raging? In short, they have no sense of security and they vent their anger, frustrations, fear, and bitterness in many, many emphatic ways.

These same evil fruits are also seen in adults. Men and women experience many complications because they are not secure in their mate's love. People very often fall apart on their jobs because they are given an ultimatum to do better or they will be fired. Time and again it has been proven that excessive stress and pressure put on people by negative incentives is counter productive. On the other hand, those who encourage and build up their employees are rewarded again and again for their efforts. Why are these things so? Simply because of the way we were created. It has been supposed by some that when we become a Christian, the human characteristics disappear. Such is not the case. We still have all the basic needs of the rest of the human race, the only difference is, we begin to find all of them met by Christ and His people. So it is with our present subject of eternal life. We still have that basic need of a place of absolute refuge and just as surely as there are devastating consequences in the natural, when people are not on solid ground, there will be devastating results in our spiritual lives if we do not know and understand that we are eternally safe in Christ. Though they may not realize or admit it, many Christians are experiencing resentment, anxiety, fear and rebellion because of their insecurity. It is oftentimes manifest in the way they treat other Christians as well as the unlovely way they treat themselves. Sad to say, they have never found the joy of resting in the finished work of Calvary and are constantly on pins and needles, fearful of making that fatal mistake that will plunge them over the edge of the precipice into that dark chasm below. Like troubled children in the natural, they never come into the realm of joy, peace and contentment offered by the security of God's boundless love.

This brings us to the second consequence which is so very closely related to the first. We can never understand the depths of a Father's love, for we view it as being conditional. If we do not recognize that we are eternally the sons of God, then we are saying that God will disown us if we do not measure up to His expectation. Again, our own society is the example of the results produced by this condition. Many children are victims of such conditional love and are suffering

from terrible rejection. They have been born into a family, but have never been accepted. They have never felt the genuine warmth of unconditional love. Many of them go through every feat imaginable trying to please their parents and gain access into their love but to no avail. Some have suffered tremendous rejection simply because they were of the opposite sex to what had been hoped for. Others have had to stand in the shadow of a brother or sister and are constantly being compared with them. They continually hear words of condemnation as to why they do not excel in certain areas as do others. The poor children are often just tolerated, if not verbally and physically abused. In short, they are not loved just for themselves, just as they are. It is impossible for them to understand what real unconditional love is. All they know is rejection which, again leads to bitterness, anger, rebellion, resentment and a host of other very unsavory traits. The results are the same in the spiritual if we do not see that we are accepted in Christ and unconditionally loved by God. Paul declares in Rom. 8:25-39, that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Jeremiah says "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Jer. 32:3. Jesus prayed in the great intercessory prayer of John 17, that the world may know that Thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou has loved me. John 17:23. Who can comprehend the love that God had for His Son and yet He prayed that we might know it! Love is not something we qualify for. We do not have to earn Divine love by our conduct. There is a growth of mutual love as we yield our lives to Him, but never do we have to earn God's love. John tells us that we love Him BECAUSE He first loved us. I John 4:19. God is the originator of love in our lives. He expresses it first. He so loved the world that He gave His most priceless possession to die for us when we were yet sinners, even enemies. He did not show such love on the condition that one day we would repent. After we are saved, He does not threaten to withdraw it and cast us out if we fail Him. Some may say, "well certainly God loves you even if you lose your salvation", but try to convince any rejected child of his parents love and he will scorn the very attempt. It is impossible for them to identify with love if they have been disowned or rejected for any reason. Likewise in the spiritual sense. If a person views himself as being cut-off from the family of God because of his conduct, he cannot identify with a Father's love. He cannot comprehend unconditional love.

Let us note at this point that God's love does not give liberty to walk after the flesh with no fear of consequence. Quite the contrary. Paul quotes from the Old Testament in Heb. 12:6, "For whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth". Chastening is one of the most powerful expressions of love, both in the natural and in the spiritual. As one little girl was heard to say, "I don't think my mommy loves me because she never spansks me". Chastening does not, however, threaten death and eventually carry out that threat if changes are not forthcoming. **HOW DARE WE ACCUSE GOD OF SUCH SEVERE CHILD ABUSE.** Chastening is for the express purpose of bringing about growth. God in His love does warn us of the consequence of yielding to the flesh, but let us point out that so many of those consequences are endured right now. We can identify more with pain in the physical body right now as a deterrent from carnality, far better than the threat of some far off eternal lake of fire. "God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall reap life everlasting." Gal. 6:8. The corruption spoken of here is experienced now. Many lives of Christians are spent in unhappiness and absolute misery and pain because they are reaping the harvest of fleshly sowing. Of course they will not enjoy the eternal reward which they could have had, had they yielded to the spirit, but they are enduring pains TODAY as a direct consequence of letting their flesh rule them, indeed pain which could have been avoided. Even David, as spiritual as he was, did reap the harvest of failing to follow God's principles. One of his errors was in marrying a woman of the Phillistines, and it was the son of that marriage, Absalom, who rose up against him and tried to take the kingdom from him. In the end, David was victorious. He made a number of miserable mistakes in his life and he suffered the consequences of them, but never did he give any indication that God would cut him off eternally for those blunders. His testimony as a new creation is found in Psa. 18. Note especially verses 19-24. These words were written near the end of his life, and again we reiterate, after a number of very grievous errors.

In the New Testament, Paul the chief apostle to the church, also deals with this same subject of chastening thru physical suffering to bring about a change of attitude. I Cor. 5 records a man guilty of very blatant fornication. Paul says to deliver such an one to Satan FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH. He was going to endure that suffering at the time then present,

not in the lake of fire. It was this very suffering that reversed his course. Later, Paul exhorted them to restore this man and confirm their love to him, to forgive him. His punishment was sufficient to produce the desired results. II Cor. 2:6-9. In all of this, there is never a hint that he was to be lost for eternity, rather I Cor. 5:5 specifically states that the destruction was given that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

To sum up, many today are continuing to sow to the flesh and many are even now suffering tremendous pain in many areas of their lives because of it. Parents are suffering heartache with their children because they have not disciplined them and trained them according to God's principles. Some, like David, are suffering because they did not seek God's counsel in marriage and persisted in their plans of being joined to unbelievers. Others have given in to greed and been consumed with the love of money, thus their own family life has suffered. The list is endless, but suffice it to say, in the words of Paul in I Cor. 3:14, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, yet he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire". The works herein mentioned are works of the flesh, be they religious or other- wise. His reward is gone, but he is not eternally damned. He is not cut off from Divine Love, disinherited and expelled from the family of God. The third consequence of not having a revelation of this glorious truth is that one cannot appreciate, or appropriate the fulness of God's grace. The tragic results of falling into this condition are twofold. First, it deprives us of all the benefits of divine Grace for our own lives. Second, it is impossible to show, or let such grace flow freely through us to others; and therefore, has a negative effect on our relationships with other people. We may become pharisaical in our attitudes, and extremely judgemental.

The Galatians, whom Paul declared to be little children, are a fitting portrait of those who cannot see Divine Grace, and are immature. These Galatians had believed upon Christ and had been saved exactly as all Christians are -- by grace through faith. Certain Judaizers, however, were trying to persuade them that they must gain God's favor and blessings by the works of the Law. Paul declares the fallacy of this: Gal. 3:2. "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" Gal 5:4, "Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the law: YE ARE FALLEN FROM GRACE."

When people turn to their own efforts for justification before God, they are not depending upon the merits of His grace. If they cannot understand and believe that salvation comes without any effort on their part, except to believe, then they are "fallen from grace". Oftentimes, men refer to this statement as meaning one has lost his salvation and is on his way to eternal damnation. According to our text in Galatians, the opposite is meant. The one who has fallen from grace is the one who fails to find that his salvation is completed in the merits of Christ. "Christ is become of no effect to you." Paul is not implying that you are not saved; he is saying that Christ does not have the control and effect on your life that He should have. The motivation of Christ has been replaced by the works of the law. We cannot be saved initially by "grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8), and then be shut up to our own efforts to keep what God has given to us by grace. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works, then is it no more of grace; other- wise, work is no more work." Rom. 11:6.

When one falls from grace, he becomes impoverished spiritually, because grace cannot do her appointed work in his life. Consider some of the provisions of God which come to us ONLY as we depend upon Divine Grace. Eph. 2:10 "We are saved by grace." Acts 20:32 declares we are built up by the word of His grace. Titus 2:11, 12, we are taught by grace. Rom. 6:14, only grace will free us from sin. Gal. 4:22-31, we are heirs of grace. II Pet. 3:18, we grow in grace.

Furthermore, when Paul was so tremendously tested and cried out for the thorn in his flesh to be removed, it was grace which sustained him, not the removal of the thorn. II Cor. 12:7-9. Finally, we are exhorted to seek the throne of Grace for help in time of need. Heb. 4:16. Simply stated, Grace must cover every area of our lives, and if we do not receive it, there is no way we can come to maturity and fruitfulness. If we persist in our own works, trying to buy, or keep what God has already freely given, we cannot experience the true ministry of "Mother Grace".

If we do not realize that our own justification is freely by His grace (Rom. 3:24), we cannot accept that same standard for others. This is another damaging result of falling from grace. We will become judgemental. James upbraids men for this attitude, as he says, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy." 4:11, 12.

The apostle further declares how unrighteous such a standard of judgment is: "But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin For whosoever shall keep the whole law and offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, "Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty (the law of grace)." James 2:10-12. James tells us in these verses that it is impossible to judge righteously by the works of the law; and yet if one does not believe in eternal life, he must be a judge of life and death situations. Statements are made, such as the following: "He used to be saved, but now he is going to hell." "At one time, he was saved and filled with the Holy Ghost, but if Jesus were to come today, he would be lost." We might ask these people, "What sin puts a person over the line, from life to death?". The answer is always the same: "There comes a time...". If the line from death to life is so clear, for most people know exactly when they were born again, then the line from life to death should be just as plain. In any case, for one to make such statements as those quoted above, some self-appointed "judge" will need to sign the death certificate for certain individuals. Someone has to become the judge of whether a man has sinned that fatal sin, to push him into the death state. WHO ARE WE TO MAKE SUCH A JUDGEMENT? As noted in James, there is only one lawgiver who is able to save and destroy.

Paul tells us in Rom. 3:33, 34, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? (judge against sentence). It is Christ that died, yea that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." We have absolutely no authority, nor right to declare that someone has sinned, and is therefore unfit for the kingdom of God. What basis, or standard do we have, except his fruit and his works, neither of which justified him in the first place. Man indeed is justified before God by grace through faith, and even that faith is not of himself, it is the GIFT of God. Eph. 2:8. What does the scripture say in regards to God's gifts? "The gifts and callings of God are without repentance." Rom. 11:29. God never changes His mind and takes back His gifts. They are freely given with no strings attached, except to believe and receive.

Consider further what is meant by the attitude of the Pharisee, or lawkeeper. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth. I will have mercy and not sacrifice." Matt. 9:12, 13. We too, must learn by experience exactly what He was talking about. In Luke 13, we read a story which surrounds this very teaching of justification on the basis of Divine Grace. Verse eleven informs us, "the Pharisee prayed thus with himself, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." One of the first things about a Pharisical attitude is that it always compares itself with others; and scripture warns emphatically against such a practice. II Cor. 10:12. Such things often lead to the exaltation of oneself, even as we find in Luke 18:14. The Pharisee put emphasis on works for justification. "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess". Both of these are good qualities to be found in Christians, but neither of them will justify him before God, and we cannot permit our flesh to glory in them, thus placing ourselves in a "holier than thou" realm.

The publican found the simple way of justification -- "God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other." vs. 13, 14.

Paul further illustrated the vast difference between those who would be justified by works and those who are heirs under grace, by using the story of Abraham. Galatians 4. Abraham had two sons, the one by the bondwoman, born after the flesh, and the other by the freewoman, which was by promise. Both of them were the sons of Abraham, but God Himself said of the one who was of the bondwoman, or after the law, "And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him." Gen. 16:12.

The same atmosphere of tension always followed the Pharisee of Jesus' time. More than once, the Master was called in question for healing on the sabbath. He was looked down upon for eating with publicans and sinners. The disciples were judged for eating with unwashed hands. Throughout the Gospels, we see these lawkeepers battling against Jesus, and finding fault with those around Him. According to the letter of the law, the Pharisees were right in some cases, but their attitude was unbearably wrong. It is no different today. When Christians think they must keep the law, or keep themselves in God's favor or to "hold on" to what has been given to them,

they feel threatened by the Grace message and become very defensive. They feel that they must guard what they have built and cultivated. This attitude does not endear them to others, anymore than the condemned people in the Gospels were drawn to the Pharisees. Condemnation and compassion do not dwell in the same house. If one sits on the judgement seat, declaring offenders to be lost, it is impossible for him to fall on his face before the mercy seat and be filled with Divine grace which will draw people rather than alienate them.

We would like to point out here that just having a revelation of eternal life does not guarantee that one will not be judgmental. The key is a deep revelation and experience of God's boundless grace. God had to instruct Peter in Acts 10, not to call common what He had cleansed. Peter was later confronted by Paul and reprimanded for refusing to eat with the Gentiles. By that refusal, Peter and other Jews were not "walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel". Gal. 2:14. The Gospel of which he speaks here, is the Gospel of Grace. Peter was called in question because he was judging the Gentiles as being unfit to eat with the Jews. He disfellowshipped them because they did not keep the law.

There are so-called "grace saints" who teach eternal life, but are judgmental, and possess critical spirits, because they do not fully comprehend the meaning and power of the Grace of God. They begin to look with critical eyes at their brothers and tear them down rather than build them up. In the Galatian letter, Paul reveals the attitude, which those who are filled with the spirit of grace, are to manifest. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." 6:1, 2. These verses contain the principles of Divine Grace.

(1) The spiritual person will restore, rather than judge, condemn and destroy.

(2) He restores with a spirit of meekness, that is, without superiority. He does not possess an "I told you so", attitude or "I'll do it, but you don't deserve it" attitude.

(3) He bears other's burdens rather than making the offender's load of guilt heavier, he intercedes for him and encourages him to victory.

(4) He "fulfills the law of Christ". This law is the law of love, which, like Mother Grace, never judges nor condemns. This outward display of grace is absolutely imperative if we desire to come to full growth in Christ.

The fourth reason for failing to comprehend eternal life, is that these people do not have a revelation of the two creations, which are referred to in scripture as "the flesh and the Spirit".

There are many scriptures which bear out the fact that God views us either in the spiritual realm, or a part of the old creation. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water (the Word of God) , and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit". John 3:5, 6.

Paul also declared emphatically and without exception or reservation, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new". II Cor. 6:17.

John makes a very bold statement in I John 3:9, which can be understood only if we realize that he is talking about the new creation. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God". As with any truth in scripture, there are damaging results if we fail to comprehend this one. If we do not understand and lay hold of our new position and identity as a new creation in Christ, we will fall into one of the following conditions. Either we will view ourselves as very competent in the flesh and become independent of the grace of God, or we will view the ugliness and corruption of our flesh, thereby falling into depression.

Saul of Tarsus is an example of the first condition as Paul portrays himself in Phil. 3:46. This Pharisee did not see himself as a man in Christ, but rather one who had attained everything by his own works and goodness. He did not need the grace of God because he was wrapped up in his own self-righteousness. This self-righteous independent character can be found in Christians when they do not acknowledge and realize in experience, that they live only by faith of the Son of God. Gal. 2:20. They erroneously credit themselves with what, in reality, God has done for them. They suppose that by their efforts, they either stand or fall.

We often hear such statements as, "We must hold out faithful to the end", or "you have to live it or wind up in a devil's hell". Christians who measure up to their own pre-conceived ideas of righteousness, invariably become conceited and self-righteous, even as the Pharisee. They are

actually proud of what they have accomplished, especially in their abstinence from certain worldly things. Others develop a martyr complex, often declaring that they are being persecuted when other folks react to their self-righteous criticisms. It is imperative that we see ourselves in Christ, realizing that we are accepted only in the beloved Christ because we are clothed with His righteousness, which comes only by faith.

The second condition is portrayed in Romans 7 by Paul after he saw how corrupt and pathetic self-righteous flesh is. Listen to the miserable cry of one, who at this point, had not experienced the joy of his new identity. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death". Rom. 7:24. Though we must all come to this place and learn the total depravity of our own flesh, this is not a victorious condition wherein we can grow. Paul saw the way of victory as he cried out triumphantly, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Rom. 7:25-8:1.

Paul saw his new position: a new creation in Christ. Then he exhorts, "Wherefore, henceforth know no man after the flesh". II Cor. 5:16. Believers are to know themselves as new creations of profound worth, in Christ. Many do not actually realize their worth in Christ, and they are suffering from a common weakness, known as low self-esteem, which can cause a multitude of problems. Some think that it is humble to declare how worthless they are, but never in the scriptures does God term the new creation worthless, and neither should we. Low self-esteem, though perhaps in a subtle way, blames God for what He has made. Sufferers continually enlarge on their own negative traits rather than seeing the purposes which God has for them in Christ.

They view themselves as of no worth
The product of mistaken birth.
Their wealth in Christ they cannot see
For all the time they look at "me".

All this leads to misery and depression. Many of God's people ignorantly assume that they are going to hell because of their conduct, never realizing that God accepts them in the Beloved, and sees them only in Christ. Some have given up trying to live a Christian life and declare, "What's the use? I cannot live a Godly life". This kind of depression does not produce a victorious person. Out of his depression, Paul cried, "O wretched man that I am." Out of depression, Elijah prayed that he might die. At one point in his life, David lost sight of God's purposes for him and said, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Phillistinese." I Sam. 27:1.

On the other hand, Nehemiah declared: "The joy of the Lord is my strength". David prayed, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation. We can only find such victorious joy as we come to know who and what we are in Christ. Our flesh is horrible, and we are to reckon as God does, that we died with Christ; but that is not the end. We arose triumphantly, a new creation in Christ. We are something valuable and beautiful and wonderful in His eyes.

Consider a scriptural example of one who was a new creation, but who identified more with the blackness of the flesh. The Shulamite of the Song of Solomon says, "I am black". 1:5, 6. Notice that she called attention to her blackness, even as men today call attention to the imperfections of their flesh. Solomon, typical of Christ, did not share her dismal view of herself. He answers by saying, "O thou fairest among women". 1:8. He continues to eulogize her by declaring her extreme worth and beauty in verses 9, 10, 15.

Such praise was effectual as we note from her later words. She has a new image of herself, as she exclaims, "I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley". 2:1. Never again does she identify with the blackness of her flesh. The rest of this song is spent in learning of him. She does make some mistakes, but the major focus of her attention is on him, not herself. So it must be in our lives. "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith." Heb. 12:2. "But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord ARE CHANGED INTO THE SAME IMAGE from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." II Cor. 3:18.

The only way of victory for us, is as a new creation in Christ, and that new creation stands before God, just as Christ Himself -- holy, unblameable, without spot or blemish. If we can measure Christ's acceptance before God, we can measure our own.

Some believe that these things are so, as long as you do nothing amiss. When you do good, you are a son of God; if you do evil, you become a child of the devil. How can this be? Jesus'

message to Nicodemus maintains a complete separation of these two seeds. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (and will never change); "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (it will be spirit for eternity).

Naturally, conduct does not change the life blood which flows within our veins. If one of our children displeases us, he does not become someone else's child. The new birth is no less final. Once we have been born of the Spirit, the very nature of Christ has been imparted to us, and we are the children of God forever.

Christians fail to come to maturity in Christ because they do not feed on God's Word, and do not allow Him to work in their lives. Many yield to the dictates of the old fleshly nature with which they were born in the natural, but the new life which was implanted at the time of the new birth forever qualifies them as a child of God.

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection." Heb. 6:1.

The final point in this message concerning eternal life, is that when men do not see it, they cannot go on into the great depths of spiritual truth contained in the Word of God.

In chapter five of Hebrews, Paul said, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat". The teaching of eternal life is one of the first principles of the oracles of God. When Jesus ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well, He put first things first: "Whosoever drinketh of water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life". John 4:13, 14. When she tried to change the subject, Jesus brought her back to the right one, by saying, "Salvation is of the Jews".

The Master's witness to Nicodemus was in like manner. The entire discourse discloses first principles of the oracles of God. John 3:3 announces the new birth. Verse 14 declares that Jesus must go to the cross, while verse 15 gives eternal life as the result. These are all very basic truths, as Jesus' words to this Pharisee indicate, "Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?" v. 10.

As Paul teaches in Hebrews, there are many things he would like to relate concerning Christ, but they are dull of hearing. They cannot at this time comprehend the meaty depths of the Word, and must be fed only with milk. Paul had the same message for the Corinthians, as he assailed them for their childish traits of envying, strife, and division. I Cor. 3:1-3 As noted previously, these are results which prevail when one does not comprehend the Grace of God. Likewise, the Galatians who did not understand justification was by grace through faith, are termed "little children". Gal. 4:19.

The Holy Spirit has been sent to guide us into all truth, not only by revelation, but also by experience. Unless we rely on Him to show us the very basic, or first principles of the Gospel, we cannot go on to experimental perfection and knowledge of the very deep treasures available to us as the sons of God. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "that the heir as long as he is a child differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all". 4:1.

Every Christian has priceless and untold wealth available to him, but until he grows in grace and the knowledge of Christ, leaving (but not forgetting) the first principles of the oracles of God, he will never fully enjoy his glorious heritage. There is so much more to the Christian experience than being saved, filled with the Holy Ghost and having healing for the body. These are indeed only the first principles of the oracles of God.

Beloved, let us realize that we are right now, eternally the Sons of God and leave these first principles to go on into the limitless worlds of spiritual treasure, which God has provided for us in the heavenlies in Christ. Eph. 1:3, 26