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The Benefits that Flow from Christ, Part 3

Life Changing Events

When one thinks of World War 1 (WW1), you might think of General John Pershing, hot air balloons, trench warfare, or perhaps the famous novel, turned into a movie; *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Surveys show that there are very few Americans who appreciate the incredible significance that this war had on Europe.

Before WW1 there was an implicit trust in government on the part of the European. Government had provided much by way of security and peace. And thus, their lives had never been so good and it was the government that was given the credit. In fact, because most of the leaders of the nations of Europe were related, Europe was thought to be one big happy family.

Yet, WW1 changed all of this. The government that was formerly viewed as a "friend" and "companion" was now seen as something that could not be trusted. Think of it, when you and I have a family squabble there might be division, and rumors may abound. But when the European rulers had a family squabble thousands upon thousands of people died, and a whole way of living was destroyed!

Now for most Americans, the significance that this war had on Europe is rarely appreciated. One man-born and raised in Europe put it this way:

"Though the US fought in the War, it was a battle fought on foreign ground. The average citizen

of Europe witnessed firsthand the carnage of war: disease, starvation, the destruction of one's homeland, ruined lives, and the seemingly meaningless death of loved ones. This can hardly be portrayed in a photograph."

See, to the European, WWI meant a radical change in the way one viewed life. And yet, to the average American it was a little understood war that was won when the USA entered it. In other words, it was no big deal.

This is the same way that many understand the effect of Christ in the life of an individual, they see it as "no big deal." They think that to follow Jesus Christ is certainly to realize some change: Christ enables a person to

- Become more religious.
- Live on a higher moral plane.
- Smile a little more.

Yet by and large, this change is something most can live without.

Now if this is the way you understand Christ, then you totally misunderstand Christ! For mark it, the Lord is NOT in the business of *Changing* people's lives BUT in the business of *Transforming* lives!

2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

See, when a person comes to Christ

- Their lives are not rearranged, but transformed.
- Their lives are not redirected, but recreated.
- Their heart is not refreshed, but redeemed.

It is not a question of religion, but a question of radical transformation!

A New Owner

And that is the point of the text that we are looking at; it is a benefit that flows from the cross of Christ is NOT merely a changed life BUT a transformed life which is an entirely different story. In fact, notice the radical transformation that an individual undergoes as a benefit of the cross of Christ.

Romans 8:9, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you [lit. "has taken up residency"]. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Picking up in his discussion in Romans 8:8 regarding the non-Christian's inability to "please God," Paul expresses his confidence that the believers at Rome were not in the flesh; i.e. controlled and ruled by the flesh, but in the Spirit; i.e. controlled and ruled by the Spirit.

Now notice the basis for Paul's confidence here: The indwelling of the Spirit of God. Paul's "if" is not a statement of doubt, but of confidence. It is better translated, "If as is the case..." Because the Roman

believers were indwelt by the Spirit, they were "pleasing" to God.¹ Now this truth leads to an important statement made by Paul: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9b)

In other words, Paul is saying that a non-Christian does not belong to God! Now the significance of this phrase is often overlooked. Notice; this verse indicates that there is an incredible shift when a person enters into the kingdom of God, they become "of God." Formerly, they were "of the world" or in the flesh (Romans 8:8) and controlled by the world, subject to the world's system (its values, goals, and desires). Yet in Christ, the child of God receives a "NEW OWNER!"

There is perhaps no clearer example of this truth than that found in Paul's teachings:

Romans 6:15-18, "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

Ephesians 2:1-4, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us."

Truly, all are bound by something- or better yet, by Someone! To be without Christ is to be the property of SATAN! Christ told the Jewish leaders, "you are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). And yet, to be saved by the cross of Christ is to receive a NEW OWNER; God the Father.

This is the point of this text. As a benefit of the cross of Christ the child of God enters into the family of God wherein he receives a NEW OWNER- God! Now this truth should fill our hearts with great joy, and yet also with a great sense of responsibility.

As to the former, great joy, to say that we are "of God" is packed-full of Biblical significance- it brings us back to Genesis 17. In Genesis 17, God approached Abraham with the promise that God would be God to him and his family, and they would be HIS PEOPLE, His Possession.² In fact, the purpose for Christ's coming was to fulfill this promise.

Matthew 1:21, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Galatians 3:13-14, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for

¹ Now based on this it is important to note that though the Roman's had professed faith in Christ (Rom. 1:7), and had a faith that was known throughout the world (Rom. 1:8), that which determined their relationship to God was NOT their profession or reputation, BUT the presence of the Spirit of God in them. And so it is with us! We are children of God not because we believe, serve, or pray. Rather, we are children of God because Christ saved us through His cross, and this cross work has been applied to our lives through the Spirit of God! That is the basis upon which we approach God!

² Compare also Jeremiah 31:33

us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Now, what are the blessings of Abraham?

Jeremiah 31:33, “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

Revelation 21:3-4, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

See, the ultimate fulfillment of the gospel is God's making us His people!

1 Peter 2:10, “Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

Now, the implications of this truth are manifold. Because we are God's people (“of God” and so the property of God) God has committed Himself to our protection.

Deuteronomy 3:22, “Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you.”
God has committed Himself to our benefit.

Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

God has committed Himself to our encouragement.

Deuteronomy 31:6, “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”

See, because we are children of God, God is our OWNER. We are never

- Bereft.
- Left as aliens.
- Abandoned as orphans.

God has promised to be with us ever and always! And yet, this doctrine should also give us a sense of great responsibility. The life we live is NOT our own, it is Christ's.³ And as I have asked before,

- "How then should we live our lives?"
- As best we can? NO!

³ Compare Colossians 3:4

- RATHER, as Christ lived His life!

And thus let me ask you, "What is it that characterized Christ's life while He walked this earth?"

Christ was consumed with God's will.

Matthew 26:39, "And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Christ was consumed with God's timing.

John 7:6, "Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready."

Christ was consumed with God's service.

Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Christ was consumed with God's glory.

John 17:4, " I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

And that also must be the case in our lives. As children of God we have no rights! We are the property of God to do with as He pleases. His...

- Will is our will.
- Glory is our life.
- Service is our delight.
- Timing is our timing.

And thus, we serve on God's terms, not ours HE IS OUR OWNER!

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

A New Life

And so the first thing that testifies to our transformed life is that we have received a NEW OWNER. And the second thing that testifies to our transformed life is that we have a new life.

Romans 8:10, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

This verse is full of theological significance. Let's break it down. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin: though we have been redeemed by Christ, our bodies still lie in a state of death. This means that our bodies are subject to decay⁴ and that they will eventually die.⁵

⁴ Compare 2 Corinthians 4:16

That's the bad news. Now notice the good news. "Yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness." This is to say that the spirit has been resurrected with Christ and now lives.

2 Corinthians 4:16, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

To understand this, we have to go back to the beginning. The life which God granted man at the beginning can be understood from a variety of angles. Upon our creation we had life spiritually, morally, physically, and eternally. That to which I want to direct your attention is our moral life. In the beginning, God created man that together we and God might have fellowship.⁶ As a result, man was endowed with

- The capacity for a love relationship- knowledge!
- A perfect Record- righteousness!
- Papers of ownership; we were owned by God- holiness!

Now when man sinned, all of this died! Yet upon the salvation of Christ, the Lord granted us NEW LIFE.

Ephesians 4:24, "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Colossians 3:9-10, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

What a glorious blessing. And yet this is only the start. Recall that the definition of "eternal life" is "life pertaining to the age."

What age? The age to come.

Truly, when a child of God enters into the kingdom of God, here identified with the words, "because of righteousness" or "on account of God's declaration that we are right" they are vivified, radically transformed, and so begin the life they will live for the rest of eternity! And so, is it appropriate to say that following Christ simply means a change in our

- Conduct?
- Attitude?
- Morals?

Absolutely not! To be a child of God is to receive

- Much more than simply a changed life.
- It is to receive a New Life- here identified as a life pertaining to the age to come!

Now, in view of this benefit, it should be obvious that one of our greatest needs as children of God is

⁵ Compare Hebrews 9:27

⁶ Compare Genesis 3:8

our living according to our eternal life. Paul calls us to “take hold of eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:12).

To “take hold of eternal life” is, in effect, to live in light of the coming kingdom to be consumed by it. And so that which must govern our

- Thoughts.
- Actions
- Desires.
- Motives.
- Goals.
- Entertainment.
- Prayer.
- OUTLOOK on life.

Are the principles and values of the life we have been granted in Christ! Notice the PRAYER Christ taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10). The focus of the Christian’s life is this:

Colossians 3:1-2, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

The word affection/mind references the orientation of an individual. A Christian’s orientation should be to “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20). When a person comes to Christ, as a benefit he receives life. And thus, everything about him ought to have reference to eternity! And yet so often we do not live according to our new life in Christ! In fact, this is why so often we struggle.

We are as adults trying to learn the game of Bridge, yet, loving the “Go Fish” we played as children, we’re trying to play the new game according to the rules of the old. IT DOESN’T WORK! Christ has radically altered our world. Stop trying to live the life of Christ by the

- Rules.
- Standards.
- Goals.

Of the old life! Again, it won’t work! And so, let this principle govern all that we do: We should devote no more attention to the elements and circumstances of our lives than is demanded by eternity! That is the necessary ramification that the benefit of New Life demands.

A New Hope

Now, a third element that testifies to our transformed life is a new hope.

Romans 8:10, “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

This verse was added because of Paul's words in verse 10, "though the body is dead because of sin."

See, to stop at verse 10 is to potentially lead to the conclusion that

- The physical body is evil.
- Eternity will be spent in a disembodied state- as hovering spirits.

Yet, God has a plan for our bodies! Just as Christ was raised from the dead and reunited with His earthly body, so also will be the case with us!

1 Corinthians 6:14, "And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power."

1 Thessalonians 4:14, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

At the Second Coming of Christ, whether we are living or dead, our bodies will undergo an incredible transformation, they will once again live! Before Christ's return, our bodies are as dust.

- Whether living or dead.
- Whether incased in a coffin or scattered throughout this world.

And yet, in the "blink of an eye" immediately they will be resurrected, reassemble, and reunited to our soul! And thus, we will spend eternity praising our God as corporeal beings! Now notice the form or nature of the state in which we will dwell.

1 Corinthians 15:40, "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another."

1 Corinthians 15:42-44, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

Philippians 3:20-21, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

See, the anticipation of all in Christ is that we will be like Christ! As Christ is, so also will His children be!
By Grace

- His glory will be our glory!
- His state will be our state!
- His stature will be our stature!

There will be...

- No more pain.
- No more weakness.
- No more sickness.

- No more disease.
- No more struggle with sin.

Now, what assurance do we have as God's people that these things are so? How can we be sure of this truth?

If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, you have the Spirit of God dwelling in you:

Ephesians 1:14, "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

See, because the Spirit indwells us, we have the assurance that Christ will certainly bring to pass this promise to redeem our bodies! And so the third and final description of the TRANSFORMED LIFE that we have received as a benefit of the Cross is a new hope! In Christ, we have the anticipation that in our bodies we will one day enter eternity!

What an incredible expectation! Think about it!

Among other things, that which separates a disembodied spirit from a spirit that dwells in a body are physical sensations.

- Touch.
- Taste.
- Feel.
- Smell.

And yet, by the grace of God we not only will spend eternity in the New Heavens and New Earth, but there we will be able to

- Touch.
- Taste.
- Feel.
- Smell.

What an incredible expectation! To experience the blessings of a corporeal existence and that free from the taintings of sin! Now if you think that this is no big deal, think for a moment about the expectation we would have without Christ. Indeed, we would spend eternity in a corporeal existence except

- Instead of being in a place where our body is free from sin.
- We would be in a place where the only thing our bodies would know are sin and its effects!

Think about it

- Why is there pain in our world?
- Why is there misery?
- Why is there sickness?

Because of Sin! Understand therefore the expectation of all outside of Christ, a corporeal existence in a

place of ultimate suffering, misery, sickness, and pain! Now against this dark and bleak backdrop, we come again to the gospel: A gospel that not only promises

- A New Master.
- A New Life.
- But grants a New Hope regarding our physical existence beyond the grave!

In Christ, do we simply receive a changed life, new and improved? NO! We received a Transformed Life!

In view of this, let me close with this appeal: If you are one this day with no hope but death, your expectation for beyond the grave is that of being separated from God for eternity in hell. YOU NEED NOT DIE! Christ can deliver you from this horrible expectation.

I therefore exhort you this day. Turn from your self-effort. Go to Christ, the GIVER of all gifts, and

- Confess your sin.
- Ask God to forgive you on account of Christ's work on the cross.
- Vow to follow Christ.

And the benefit of this passage, a transformed life, will be yours!

About Bethel Presbyterian Church

The Bethel Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word is published regularly.

VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10th Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. The recording for this sermon and these notes can be found [A Transformed Life](#). The web address for all sermons at Bethel Presbyterian Church can be found out as follows: <http://bethelpresbyterian.sermonaudio.com>

About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on September 7, 2008. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church