

Chapter Two: The New Life in Jesus Christ

The next two chapters in this book will focus on the new life in Christ. In Chapter One we talked about salvation and the obtaining of salvation. To be more precise, we saw that this salvation is most specifically presented to us through a promise of everlasting life for all those who believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus procured everlasting life for us on his cross. In other words, everlasting life is bought and paid for, and now he offers this life to us for free. He did all of the work, and we just believe him. In addition, we saw that the effects of obtaining everlasting life (the fullness of everlasting life actually being Jesus himself) are altogether freeing and glorious, full of power, rest, and love. Thus, having laid this foundation and having explained the treasures of the salvation given to us in Jesus, I would like to devote the rest of this book to looking at this wonderful salvation in even greater detail. At the time of believing in Jesus, we are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Jesus Christ, and thereby, become a new creature. (1 Corinthians 12:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:17) We are, thus, raised from the dead and begin a new life. How does this new life come about and what does it look like? How should these new-born babes in Christ be raised? What should they be fed with? I will spend the rest of this chapter talking about the infancy of believers in Christ. Everything starts here. Raise a child well and he shall be well. Raise a child otherwise and he will be miserable.

In order to talk about the new life of a believer in Jesus Christ, I would like to talk about how this life comes about. To do this, it is necessary to say a couple of things that can offer help to people who haven't yet believed on Jesus as Savior, or perhaps have believed on Jesus, but feel that their faith is inferior or insufficient. I feel this is important and relevant to this chapter because belief in Jesus is the only essential and necessary element needed to be saved. Life begins the moment we believe in Jesus. To say it

another way, faith in Jesus is our moment of conception. Furthermore, Paul sets the stage for our entire life in Christ when he says in Colossians 2:6, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." How did we receive Jesus? The simple answer is that we received Jesus by believing in him. (John 1:12, 1 John 5:1) So, the first thing I would like to say is to never let the excuse of having unbelief cause you to stumble or be offended. If you can't believe, believe anyway and he'll just accept you as you are. The sad thing is that many people end up getting advice which goes something like this: "You should keep reading your Bible and praying. Ask God to reveal himself to your heart and give you faith. I'll keep praying for you too." Thus, the gospel becomes "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that prays and waits and receives faith in me hath everlasting life." This is a shame indeed. However, we read in the 2 Corinthians 6:2, "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Salvation is today. There is no need to pray and wait. Just believe and even if you think you can't believe, just believe anyway. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Don't make excuses and don't wait another second. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

The second thing that I would like to say is that believing on Jesus can in many ways be seen as an act of selfishness, at least in the eyes of the world. I say this because by believing in Jesus, we are actually putting our due blame, responsibility, and guilt on somebody else. In the world we live in, if I were to let somebody else take the blame for my wrong-doing, I would not only be seen as a selfish person, but I would also be seen as a coward. However, this is exactly what happens the moment we believe. "Here, Jesus, take it all. I throw all of my sins and responsibility and duties on you." When we say this, through our act of belief in him, he gladly replies "OK." The proof of this is the cross. He went gladly. Thus,

the Master and Lord of all becomes Servant of all. We don't serve him, but he serves us. We don't minister unto him, but he ministers unto us. If we see Jesus as a teacher who gives out everlasting life to his good pupils, we might cry out, "Lord, I will sell all, give to the poor, and follow you wherever you go." However, if we see him as Savior, we cry out, "Lord, you do everything for me. I have no legs to follow." The point of what I am trying to say is that when we believe in the Savior Jesus, we are actually doing that which is indeed selfish. Yet, doing that which is selfish is exactly what we have to do if we are to believe on him. We must get this into our head, for this is exactly what happens when someone believes on the Savior. The pride of man hates this, but so be it. "I believe you, Jesus! You are my Savior!" Jesus says to "Love your neighbor as yourself," but before you can love your neighbor, you first have to love yourself. At the time of salvation, all of the needs of my neighbor take a back seat to the needs of my own soul. So, even though it is true that many people need help and it is even more true that one should take responsibility for his own actions, forget all of that and forget everyone else — "Jesus! Help me! Save me!"

When we believe on Jesus and thereby receive him, Jesus actually ministers unto us and serves us and washes our feet. This is his joy and this is why he came to earth. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) This is the place we have to stay. This is abiding in him. So, though there be a lot of selfishness in believing on our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the way of our salvation and this is the will of the Lord.

Just to restate again (and I know I am being very repetitive), Paul sets the stage for our life in Christ when he says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." It was by faith that we received him, and it didn't matter whether we thought our faith was great or not because the whole point of believing in Jesus is to just commit ourselves to him in child like

trust. In other words, whether you think your faith is great or small, it doesn't matter because the act of believing in the Savior Jesus can simply be thought to be a time when we throw up our hands and say something like "Here I am. I need you, but I have nothing to offer you. I don't have any great faith and I can't repent. I have no promises or resolutions for you. Just take me as I am. I commit my entire existence to you and my life is in your hands. I trust you with my past, present, and future. I believe you." We had nothing of value to give or offer when we received Jesus. Our entire existence had no value. However, we just believed the good news that God sent his Son to reconcile worthless people. He raises the dead and gives value to that which has no value.

Let's now look at what this new life in Jesus Christ looks like. New-born babes in Christ are those who have just had their eyes opened to the glory of Jesus Christ. They saw the Savior and realized that they needed him. They received and believed the good news of the gospel that "whosoever believes in Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life." They believe that Jesus will do that which he promised and all of their trust and hope is in him. Their faith is pure and their joy is simple. They have found hope and relief for their souls. Their faces often shine like the sun and their eyes twinkle like the stars. They have been given new life and everybody who sees them says with astonishment, "Is that the same person?" They are in love with the Savior. He is the breath of their lives and they long for the day when they can be with him face to face.

However, just as a new born baby is frail and delicate, these too are fragile. The slightest wind is able to blow them off course. (Ephesians 4:14) Some of these babes may be tempted to doubt, while others may be targeted for deception by false teachers and phony ministers of light. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15) Whatever the case may be, however, these little ones who believe in Jesus are kept and can never perish.

Another characteristic that distinguishes these little ones is

that they are greatly loved by the Father. Their value is worth more than all of the nations of the earth and it would be easier for every living being on earth to disappear and give up the ghost than it would be for one of these babes to perish. (Matthew 18:14) Let's be careful to never offend them, for their angels do always behold the face of the Father in heaven. (Matthew 18:10) These little ones are the priority of Jesus Christ and all of his thoughts are toward them. It is mainly for these little ones that church leaders, elders, pastors, and teachers exist. Jesus would much rather see every man on the face of the earth drop into hell than see harm done to one of these babes in Christ. (Matthew 18:6) They are dear to him and the apple of his eye. They are loved above all else and the sword of the Almighty God will drop upon all who despise, abuse, belittle, or snub them.

In the world, babies grow up into adolescence and eventually adulthood. This should be the case with believers in Jesus Christ too. However, we learn in the Bible that this is often not the case. (Hebrews 5:12-14, 1 Corinthians 3:1-2, and Ephesians 4:14) Some people can go on as baby Christians for many many years and hardly grow at all. Just as a baby in the world cannot grow up to be strong without proper care and child-raising, neither can these grow up without proper oversight and education. The church, besides worshipping, praising, and giving thanks to the King of kings, is involved in a lot of activities such as Bible studies, prayer, small group meetings, local outreach and evangelism, ministry to the poor, world-wide missions support, and various social activities. However, among these activities, the care and concern of these babes in Christ, namely the young and weak in the church, should be top priority.

I mention all of these things because I want to assure you that if you believe in Jesus, you are greatly loved regardless of what your life looks like or how you feel or what others may think about you. Your soul is of greater value to God than the whole world itself. The purpose of the rest of this book is to show you

how you are to abide in Jesus Christ.

I would like to continue now by answering the other two questions proposed in the beginning of this chapter. What should these new-born babes in Christ be fed with and how should they be raised?

To put it simply, babes in Christ should be fed with the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. This may sound obvious, but the sad thing is that many new-born babes are starving to death.

In order to try to make as clear as possible what I am saying, I would like to give you an example. Now, I know that people go through so many different experiences that this example probably won't apply to most people. Therefore, I don't want to focus on the circumstances or experiences of the person in this hypothetical story, but I would like us to focus on the heart of his problem. I believe that his problem is actually what is troubling many people today:

A young man senses emptiness in his life and seeks to fill that emptiness by seeking the true meaning of life. By one way or another he finds himself in a church and hears a message on Jesus and his cross. He believes in Jesus and is assured of having forgiveness of sins and a new life. Everything is great, but then something happens. He finds out that Christians just don't spend their days daydreaming about their Savior, but rather, are committed to a life of service to him. He is taught that this all starts with a church-based Bible study, and afterward, "if he wants to follow through with the Lord," should get baptized in water. The young believer then senses that going through the Bible studies and baptism is sort of like an initiation process into the church. Finally, after weeks of study, the day of his water baptism arrives and he is officially welcomed into the church. Everything seems great as he sets out on his new life in Christ. He attends church regularly, tithes, attends small group, and enjoys fellowshiping with other Christians. However, he soon finds a sense of emptiness returning to his heart. He feels confused about

the root of his depression and dissatisfaction. He thinks that maybe it is because of sin. He can't find total freedom from sin. Also, he is perplexed about what exactly the will of the Lord is for his life. He isn't even sure about what would bring him happiness. He consults some friends, reads some books, and talks to the pastor once or twice. He is told that there is no complete freedom from sin in this world and he is encouraged to wait on the Lord. "Keep praying and be patient. Try to read your Bible more and seek the will of the Lord for your life." Finally, after weeks of feeling lost, he "receives" some enlightenment on the purpose of his life as a Christian. He learns that Christians live to "go into all nations and make disciples." He resolves to concentrate more on the things of Christ, repent afresh, and actively pursue local outreach. He feels a sense of relief and peace in his heart. It's just like starting all over again. And so he lives for a few months...

The young man in the story above has started out on what is the beginning of a cycle of ups and downs. He will, in fact, find no freedom. Rather, I say that if he were to find freedom living the way this story ends, he would be deceived and all the more lost. In the story, the young man seeks the will of the Lord, makes promises, repents afresh, and pursues a life of purpose found in evangelistic activities. After doing all of these things, he finally feels relieved and a sense of peace. Yes, it is as if he is starting all over again. However, he is greatly deceiving himself. Why would I say such a thing? I say such a thing because this young man has "left his first love," which was Jesus himself. How did this young man actually start out? He simply believed the Gospel and had joy in believing. Whom did he believe in? He believed in Jesus and he believed that Jesus was faithful to do the things he said he would do, namely, forgive his sins and give him freedom and everlasting life. Through believing in Jesus, the young man had joy, peace, and relief. He had a natural holiness and his face shined. However, as soon as he made the transition from "Jesus" to "the things Christians are supposed to do" he walked away from Savior. He

believed, but he gave in under temptation. (Luke 8:13) His temptation began the moment he was offered the Bible studies and water baptism. (Neither study nor outward ceremony is required for salvation. Sadly, it is often these very things that hinder salvation because they introduce the danger of turning the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ into vain religious works. Many a time, instead of just being given the freeing message of the cross of Jesus Christ, people are offered a mixture of the Savior Jesus and “the things that Christians do if they really want to follow through with the Lord.” This mixture is deadly and evil. Therefore, we must maintain the simplicity of God’s salvation message. We just hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and believe the good news that God in Jesus has done everything for us. Jesus is the one who died for us and rose again. He did it all!) Continuing on, the young man in the story above should have been encouraged to get to know the love of Jesus more. He should have been taught to rest in his Savior and to enjoy his Savior. However, he was not. Instead, he went through the standard operating procedures of so many churches, namely, get people to make a decision to believe in Jesus and then get them so busy doing other things that they forget about their Savior altogether. He was Savior through and through, but in a flash, he became Teacher first and Savior second. As a result, he was deceived and walked away from his Savior.

The young man in the story should have “abided” in Jesus. Jesus is where life begins and Jesus is where life continues. Jesus states, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” (John 15:4) Abiding in Jesus means believing in him. All those who believe in Jesus bear the fruits of love and enjoy the gifts of the Spirit naturally. However, Jesus also warns that “if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” (John 15:6) Abiding in Jesus is vitally important. We are

not abiding in Jesus, if after we believe in Jesus, we start to emphasize or pursue someone or something else. As a result of not abiding in Jesus many feel lost, have depression, are up and down, are trapped in sin, and just feel sick. Like the young man in the story, they are withering. True peace is found in believing in Jesus. This is where we Christians start and this is where we have to stay.

So often church activities and “the things that Christians do” distract believers from the only thing that is needful, Jesus Christ himself. (Luke 10:38-42) Not only this, but add in the cares of the world and soon enough these babes in Christ are suffering from overwhelming pressure on all sides. Some suddenly stop coming to church while others bounce from church to church. Still yet, others lose their joy and some get so carried away in activities and passions that they can go on for years and not even know that they are deceived. These young ones need to be continually fed with the Jesus they received at the *moment of their salvation. Church activities and worldly pressures didn't matter at that moment. The only thing that mattered was the Savior who was to save their souls. Believers need to live their whole lives in the moment of their salvation. This was when it was just them and their Savior. If they do this, they will see Jesus and they will bear fruit naturally. If babes in Christ do not reject temptations and compulsions to depart from the Savior, they will most certainly live their lives in failure and sin. They will spend their days in a state of wandering or as those who have been deceived by a form of religion or some other thing.

Finally, let's look at the question of how these babes in Christ should be raised. The simple answer to this question is that they should be raised to know the Savior Jesus Christ more and more so that they become established and unshakeable in him. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” If a man possesses everlasting life, he lacks nothing and there is nothing for him to seek after to acquire. As I stated before, everlasting life is Jesus Christ (1 John 5:20) and we experience

everlasting life by knowing Jesus and the Father who sent him. (John 17:3) Furthermore, the Father sent the Son into the world not to condemn the world, but to save it, so these little ones should not be raised to know the Teacher Jesus who puts on them a heavy yoke as Moses did, but they should be raised to know the Savior Jesus whose yoke is light and whose commandments are not grievous. (John 3:17, Matthew 11:28-30, and 1 John 5:3) Many believers are encouraged, either directly or indirectly, to get involved in activities as soon as possible. Although the intentions of this encouragement may be well placed, it is wrong to do this. The reason this is wrong is because many believers come to believe that these activities are actually the substance of Christian living. The Christian life then becomes all about doing something or living a certain way, and thus, Christianity becomes nothing more than common religion. However, Christianity is all about Jesus Christ. He is the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega. So, knowing this, it makes no sense at all to tell these little ones that salvation and life are obtained by faith alone in Christ alone, but then have them chasing after activities and other things the moment a confession of faith comes out of their mouths. We should be dedicated to helping these little ones become completely established in their Savior and his free love and salvation. If we do this, they will bear fruit unto God naturally. However, the fact remains that there are many people who have spent many years in church and sadly have no idea what the Gospel is and what the Gospel means. Their lives have been reduced to religious observances and “doing good.” Many of these people sincerely think that they are pleasing God, but the only thing that pleases God is faith in Jesus Christ that works by love. This love begins with the restoration and comfort of their own souls as they grow in the knowledge of the Son of God and in the power of his salvation. Babies in Christ first have to be ministered to before they can minister unto others. They have to become established in the love of Jesus before they can proclaim the love of Jesus. They have to

learn how to rest before they can give rest to others.

*I realize that many people may not remember the exact “moment” of their salvation. This is okay, for Jesus said, “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” Thus, if you believe on the Savior, you are saved regardless of whether or not you remember the exact moment of your salvation.