

CHAPTER 4

OUR LIFE -- THE RESULT

Our Bible becomes more meaningful to us when we relate its truths to our own lives. We are to be open to change so that we might be all that God wants us to be. It is so easy to have some pre-conceived idea of what we want to be and then come to the Bible to find a verse which will support our position. This not handling the Word of God correctly. This is conforming God to our image. We are to conform our lives to the image of Christ.

Not long ago, a lady said to me, "I don't believe in being baptized." I then showed her some verses which told of the early Christians being baptized after they committed their lives to Christ. I also directed her attention to the verse which commands those who are pointing people to Christ to baptize these same people in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. She then replied, "But I am afraid of the water!" This lady was allowing a childhood fear to control her Christian activities. She later was baptized and is now living a triumphant Christian life.

In order for us to change, we must realize our position before God. Before we commit our lives to Christ, we are considered dead in trespasses and sin. That is, we are not alive spiritually. This is the reason we must be born again. This new birth is a spiritual birth.

Look up the three references in Reference Group Number 1 and notice our condition before we came to Christ and what happens when we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Reference Group Number 1

Ephesians 2:1-3 (If your Bible uses the word "quicken" it simply means to make "alive.")

John 3:1-7

John 1:11-13 (Keep your Bible open to this passage.)

Notice in this John 1:11-13 that Jesus came to His own people and they did not receive Him; but as many as received Him, He gave them the authority to become children of God. There are three steps in this verse.

First of all, there must be a heart-belief. Note the word "believe." This has to do with an intellectual acceptance. That is, one must believe that Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose again from the grave.

CHAPTER 4

OUR LIFE -- THE RESULT

Then notice the words "received Him." This has to do with spiritual appropriation. We must act upon what we believe to be true. If you were given a bonus check, of \$10,000, by your employer, you would become very excited. You know that the check is good, but let's say you don't cash it. You frame it instead. You hang it up so everyone can see the good fortune that has come your way. You say, "That would be foolish, I would never do that with a \$10,000 check."

Let me remind you that many people believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe everything the Bible has to say about Him, but they have never taken Him as their personal Savior. They simply display their Bible on a coffee table or on the fireplace mantle to show their belief in its truths. They need to personally endorse what they believe. They need to spiritually appropriate the truth they know to be true. When we receive by personal invitation into our lives, we are spiritually appropriating Christ as our Savior.

Last of all, we need to make a personal commitment to the fact that "Christ is our personal Savior. Note the phrase "on His name" in John 1:12. The word "on" would better be translated "into." Thus, it would read "to them that believe into His name." This word "into" suggests moving from a position outside of Christ to a position in Christ. So we move "into" Him. This speaks of personal commitment.

Let's look at our illustration once again. We have received the check for \$10,000 and have personally received it by endorsing it for deposit in your name. However, that \$10,000 in the bank will do you no good until you use it to purchase something of value to you; such as a car, new clothes, or a down-payment on a new home. When you write out a check for the product you desire, you are making a personal commitment to someone else based upon your confidence in the bank which holds your money. When you declare Jesus Christ to be your Savior, after personally inviting Him into your life, you are making a personal commitment to others based upon your confidence in the truth of God's Word and the promises of Jesus Christ.

Possibly the one passage of scripture which brings this out most clearly is Romans 10:8-13. Look up that passage and notice the three steps:

CHAPTER 4

OUR LIFE -- THE RESULT

Intellectual assent Belief in Christ

"shall believe in your heart..." vs. 9

"For with the heart man... " vs. 10a

Spiritual appropriation Reception of Christ

Call upon Christ to be your Savior. vs. 13

Personal Commitment Mouth confession of Christ as Savior.

"The Word is near you ..." vs. 8

"if you shall confess with your mouth..." vs. 9

"with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." vs. 10

When a person receives Jesus Christ as Savior, it is the beginning of a new life. One man has listed thirty-two things which happen instantly when we receive Christ as our Savior. Let me point out a few of the things which are most meaningful to me.

First of all, God has forgiven our sins. In 1 John 1:7 it states that all of our sins are forgiven. Not just the little sins are forgiven but the big ones which we have a hard time forgetting. When you look upon the passage I have assigned in relation to the forgiveness of sins, note the phrase which states "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." the verb "cleanses" is in the present tense and conveys the idea that God is continually cleansing us from all of our sin.

Secondly, we are given eternal life. We don't have to wait one hundreds years to get it. Eternal life does not become ours upon our death. It is given to us as soon as we commit our lives to Jesus Christ. If you have received Christ, you have eternal life right now. Read John 3:36 and 1 John 3:36 and 1 John 5:11-13. So many people look upon physical death as their entry into eternal life. That is not true, If a person waits that long to get eternal life, he will miss it altogether. The new birth grants us the new life now from God which shall never end.

Thirdly, we become a child of God. This speaks of a new relationship which we never enjoyed before. God becomes our heavenly Father. In love, He begins to minister to us a new and intimate way. He desires to meet all our needs. and He carefully watches over us to protect us from anything

CHAPTER 4

OUR LIFE -- THE RESULT

which would cause us harm. May I encourage you then to cast all your cares and concerns upon Him, because He cares for you very much.

Fourthly, we become a new creation and a product of His workmanship. If you yield yourself to Him daily, you will realize the greatest potential your life could possibly attain, because He will make of you what His loving heart desires. You will also find your greatest happiness and joy in this life as well as in the life to come. If you were to make something which could be displayed as your workmanship wouldn't you try to make it the very best you could so that others might see your handiwork? God, too is concerned with His handiwork. He is the master craftsman. He has designed us and is desirous of molding us into an object that will cause others to look with great admiration upon His workmanship. You and I can only be all that God desires to make of us if we yield completely to His control daily.

Reference Group Number 3 This deals with that which happens to us when we invite Christ into our lives.

- a) Our sins are forgiven 1 John 1:7-9
(Note: "cleanses us from all sin.")
- b) We are given eternal life right now. 1 John 5:11-13
(Note: "that you may know that you have (i.e. right now) eternal life.")
- c) We become a child of God John 1:12
- d) We become a new creation in Christ 2 Corinthians 5:17
and are a product of His workmanship. Ephesians 2:8-10

When we accept Christ as our Savior, this is not the end. Rather, it is the beginning of a new life with new purpose, new outlooks, and new goals. When we begin our new life in Christ, we begin as spiritual babes. We may be fully mature both physically and mentally, yet when we begin in Christ, we start out as babes. This means that our spiritual understanding and our spiritual discernment is not fully developed. These will develop as we mature or grow in our relationship to Christ. If we fail to grow in our relationship to Christ, we become what is known as a "carnal" Christian. The word "carnal" means "fleshly" or that which has to do with the body. Thus, a carnal Christian is one who is giving his attention to his body and its needs and not to his spirit which will communicate with God. Do not

CHAPTER 4

OUR LIFE -- THE RESULT

misunderstand me. We must take care of our bodies. We should do for our bodies those things which are healthy and normal. However, we should not give all our time to meeting its appetites and needs. One who is a carnal Christian is one who is self-centered. He will be more concerned about temporal things which perish than about eternal things which endure. He will want things to rotate around him. God wants us to give Him first place in our lives and rotate our lives around Him. This does not mean that a person must quit his job and enter the Christian ministry. It simply means we are to take God into account; not only by worshipping Him but also in our jobs, our homes, and our hobbies.

One way to escape becoming a carnal Christian is to be sure we are growing or maturing in our Christian life and experience. We will never reach the place of complete maturity this side of heaven. However, throughout this life, we should continue to grow. In order to grow into a healthy Christian, we should keep a balance in three areas of our life.

First of all, we must maintain a fellowship with God. We learn of God through His Word. This is one reason we have encouraged you to read the book of John in relation to these studies. You have been encouraged to look up Bible verses which deal with the various subjects we have touched in this study,. All of this is designed to help you to understand God and His purpose for your life. But fellowship is a two way street. If one person does all the talking, it is not fellowship but a monologue. In order for you to have fellowship with God, there must be inter-action. God communes with us through His Word, and we communicate with God through prayer.

In prayer, we talk with God. He is concerned about our needs and desires. You should learn to go to Him with everything. Thank Him for the wonderful things He has done for you. Thank Him for your salvation. Thank Him for your wife or husband, if you are married. Thank Him for the children He has so graciously given you. There are hundreds of things you can be thankful for. Do so! If you have anxieties, take them to Him. You may be concerned about your job or some event that is about to take place. Tell Him your concerns, and ask Him for that which you desire to see happen. Jesus said, "If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." That's a tremendous statement: but it is even more wonderful when we realize He will do exactly as He promised!

CHAPTER 4

OUR LIFE -- THE RESULT

Bard relates. My first pastorate was in a small rural community. The church could not pay very much, but my wife and I were committed to service for the Lord and were willing to let God and the church take care of the finances. One month, the money got down to zero, and we had nothing in the house to feed either ourselves or our one baby boy. Many times my wife's mother would send us \$10.00 at the end of the month, but it had not come that month. We determined God knew our situation and He would take care of us. However, I felt I should pray and ask God to send in the money that morning because we had nothing for lunch or dinner. As I prayed, I thought of how my mother-in-law had met our needs in months past. As soon as the mail was out at the little post office, I jumped in the car and drove over. To my dismay, there was no letter from her. Had God failed? No, indeed! He wanted to show me just how carefully He hears and answers prayer.

I had leafed through the mail and was about to leave when the post-mistress came to the window and started talking with me. She had never been to our church and told me of her many activities that made it impossible to come. I assured her that we would be glad to have her come anytime she could make it. Then she handed me a roll of dimes. As she pressed them into my hand, she said, "I have wanted to help you in some way. Please take this and use it as you see fit." I stood there somewhat doubtful of what was happening and said, "Oh, no. I couldn't take this!" She insisted and, as I walked out of that little post office and across the road to the grocery store to buy some food with that \$5.00 roll of dimes, I realized in a new way God's concern and care for those who belong to Him. Learn to take your needs to Him. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."

Secondly, we need to fellowship with other believers in order to grow in our Christian life. I cannot emphasize the importance of this enough. Some have mentioned they can hear better sermons on the radio and television than they do at some local church. That may be so, but when you have a need, it is hard to get that radio or television set to reach out to help you. Once again, fellowship is a two-way street. Others will share with you, and that will help you to grow. As you share with them, it will help them to grow. The Bible admonishes us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We are to encourage one another to love and good works. It is

CHAPTER 4

OUR LIFE -- THE RESULT

amazing what just a smile or a warm handshake will do for a person. Sometimes just seeing a person is a source of encouragement,. One person has pointed out how several logs burn brightly together, but if one is put aside alone on the cold hearth, the fire goes out. So it is with our relationship to other Christians. We need to be together with other Christians.

I am sure you have heard it said, "I don't go to church because of all the hypocrites in church." Now, what he has said is true. In every church, there are many people who profess to be more than they really are. But every Christian has this problem to some extent I do. I wish I wouldn't let the empty thoughts go through my mind that often find their way in there. I wish I could control my tongue and not say things in haste. I wish I wouldn't do things that cause me grief and cause a bad reflection on my Lord. That is the very reason I need the fellowship of other Christians. We're all in the same boat. We need each other to help one another. When a person has a victory, we are able to rejoice together. If he is defeated, we pray together. This helps us to grow together in our Christian life.

Thirdly, we need to share with others what has happened to us by our new birth and what is happening to us as we are changed by the power of God working in our lives. When you see a spot in your life that has been a hindrance to you spiritually and you get victory over it, share it with others. This is witnessing to the power of God in your life. Now, this is not to be boasting. We are not to tell how great we think we are because of our new-found faith, rather we are to share before one and all what God has been able to do in our lives as we have allowed Him to have control of our lives. God gives us the power to be children of God. He also gives us the power to enable us to share our faith to others who are still outside of Christ.

Self check Number 1

1. When we accept Christ, it involves three steps according to Romans 10:8-13. Can you name these steps without looking at Reference Group Number 2? _____

CHAPTER 4

OUR LIFE -- THE RESULT

2. Fellowship with God is a two-way street. What is involved in this fellowship? _____
3. Fellowship with others is also a two-way street. What is involved in this fellowship? _____
4. Fellowship with God and with others will help us to _____
spiritually.
(answers in Outline and Study Guide)

Reference Group Number 4

a. Fellowship with God.

John 5:39-40 "They are they which testify of me."
(Jesus speaking)

Philippians 4:6-7

b. Fellowship with other believers.

Hebrews 10:24-25

1 John 1: 3-7 (Both fellowship with God and others
mentioned)

c. Witness to others.

Acts 1:8

Acts 8:1-4 The early church was scattered because of
persecution and they "went everywhere
preaching the word."

It is my sincere prayer that these studies have helped you. If you have come to the place where you received Jesus Christ as your Savior but you have not told anyone yet, be sure to tell the person who told you about this study or contact the Church at www.bakercreekcommunity.org or 503-434-5541. It will greatly encourage them to know it, and it will help you as you begin to grow in your Christian life.

CHAPTER 4

OUR LIFE -- THE RESULT

May God richly bless you as you grow in the grace and knowledge of the One who loved you and gave Himself for you.