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What Does It Mean to Be “Born of God”?

There is great confusion about what it means to be “born again,” and similarly, “born of God.” In John 3:2-12 Jesus taught that to be born again literally means to be born of the Spirit, to become a spirit being, which will take place at the first resurrection when Jesus Christ returns. Jesus Christ is the firstborn from the dead. No one else has been resurrected to eternal life—no one has been born again. In addition, the phrase “born of God” is the result of two mistranslated Greek words, the result of the misinterpretation that one is born again when converted.

A Mistranslation of I John 3:9

The faulty translation of two Greek words in I John 3:9 in the KJV, as well as in other versions, is at the heart of the problem. The KJV reads: “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.” This verse as translated presents irreconcilable contradictions with other verses within the Epistle of First John, as well as the rest of the New Testament.

Contrary to this incorrect translation, John wrote that Christians who have the Holy Spirit do indeed sin, and they need to confess their sins to Jesus Christ for forgiveness: “However, if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from every sin**. If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our own sins**, He is faithful and righteous, to **forgive us our sins**, and to **cleanse us from all unrighteousness**. **If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar**, and His Word is not in us. My little children, **I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin**. **And yet, if anyone does sin**, we have an Advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ *the* Righteous; and He is *the* **propitiation for our sins**; and not for our sins only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world” (I John 1:7-10; 2:1-2).

In the same epistle, John wrote that if anyone should see a brother sin a sin not unto death [a sin that is repentable], he should pray for that brother, and God would give him life; that is, God would grant him forgiveness: “**If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin that is not unto death, he shall ask, and He will give him life for those who do not sin unto death**. There is a sin unto death; concerning that *sin*, I do not say that he should make *any* supplication *to God*. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death” (I John 5:16-17).

Listed below are phrases that John wrote in the first, second and fifth chapters of his first epistle, which directly contradict I John 3:9 in the KJV, “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.” The following verses cannot be reconciled:

I John 1:7-10; 2:1-2 and 5:16-17:

- 1) The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from every sin
- 2) If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves
- 3) If we confess our own sins ... to forgive us our sins
- 4) He cleanses us from all unrighteousness
- 5) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar
- 6) I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin
- 7) Yet, if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ
- 8) He is the propitiation for our sins
- 9) Not for our sins only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world

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- 10) If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *that is* not unto death, he shall ask
- 11) He will give life for those who do not sin unto death
- 12) There is a sin unto death
- 13) All unrighteousness is sin
- 14) There is a sin not unto death

It would be completely incongruous for John to write in the first and last part of his short epistle about how converted brethren do sin and need forgiveness, and at the same time to write in I John 3:9 that one who has been “born of God doth not commit sin” and “he cannot sin.” Since the Scriptures cannot contradict one another, what is the solution?

Two Mistranslated Words in I John 3:9: Only Jesus Christ has been born again by the resurrection from the dead. No one else will be born again by the resurrection from the dead until Jesus Christ’s Second Coming. Furthermore, Verse 9 as translated in the KJV does not apply to Jesus Christ and cannot apply to Christians because none of them have been resurrected from the dead. A further examination of this verse reveals two incorrectly translated Greek words.

“Born of God”: The first mistranslated word is found in the phrase “**born** of God.” The word “born” is translated from the Greek verb *γεννω* *gennao*. In the KJV, *gennao* has been translated as “beget, begat” or “begotten” 55 times; as “born,” 37 times; and as “conceive, bear, brought forth, deliver,” or “gender” 4 times. The contexts of the Scriptures determine whether *gennao* should be translated “begotten” or “born” (Wigram, *Englishman’s Greek Concordance of the New Testament*).

In the genealogical table of Jesus Christ’s physical lineage, *gennao* is used 42 times and has been correctly translated “begat” because the lineage is reckoned from the father, who begets the son. In these verses, it would have been incorrect to translate *gennao* as “born” because fathers do not give birth; they “beget.” Conversely, in Matthew 1:20 in reference to the Virgin Mary’s pregnancy by the power of the Holy Spirit, *gennao* has been translated in the KJV as “conceived,” with a marginal note reading “begotten”: “But while he [Joseph] thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which **is conceived** [begotten] in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 1:20). A more accurate translation of this verse would read: “But as he pondered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to *be* your wife, because that which **has been begotten** in her is of *the* Holy Spirit.’ ”

Luke also used the verb *gennao* in his account of the angel Gabriel’s announcement to Mary. Luke 1:35 in the KJV reads: “And the angel answered and said unto her, ‘The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that **holy thing which shall be born** of thee shall be called the Son of God.’ ” In this phrase, *gennao* is not in the future tense. Rather, it is in the present tense, passive participle, singular neuter *γεννωμενον* *gennomenon*. This would more correctly be translated as follows: “And the angel answered *and* said to her, ‘*The* Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and *the* power of *the* Highest shall overshadow you; and for this reason, **the Holy One being begotten** in you shall be called *the* Son of God.’ ” The use of the present passive tense participle means that while the angel Gabriel was speaking these words to Mary, God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit was impregnating her. Therefore, it is incorrect to translate this present tense participle as a future event, as found in the KJV. While it was true that a future birth would take place, that is not the literal meaning of *gennomenon*.

With this knowledge, the first part of I John 3:9 can also be corrected by simply translating *gennao* as “begotten,” instead of “born.” As a result, the correct rendering should read: “Everyone **who has been begotten** by God ...” The phrase “who has been begotten” is translated from the Greek participle *γεγεννημενος* *gegennemonos*, which is a perfect passive participle of the verb *gennao*. This participle means that the begettal had already taken place in a past time. As in human life, a begettal is not a birth. The begettal takes place first,

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then after the gestation period, the birth occurs.

“Doth Not Commit Sin”: The second phrase in I John 3:9 that has not been accurately translated in the KJV is: “doth not commit sin.” There is no question that a converted person does commit sin, but upon true repentance, through the grace of God and by the blood of Jesus Christ, those sins can be forgiven. The key to understanding this phrase is an accurate translation of the Greek verb **ποιει** *poiei*, translated “commit.” As used in Verse 9, **ποιει** *poiei* is a third person, singular, present tense form of the verb **ποιεω** *poieo*, which means: “to do, generally, i.e., habitually, to perform, to execute, to exercise, to practice, i.e., to pursue a course of action, to be active, to work ...” (Berry, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 81).

The context of John’s epistle is not about a Christian’s inability to commit sin. Therefore, *poiei* in this context means practicing in the habitual sense. When *poiei* in Verse 9 is rendered “does not practice sin,” the contradictions created by the KJV are removed. The correct translation of this portion of Verse 9 reads: “Everyone who has been begotten by God does not practice sin.” This is a true statement and conveys the original meaning of the Greek. Furthermore, the meaning of *poiei* is retained in the second part of Verse 9 with reference to “cannot sin,” which should read, “cannot practice sin.” Consequently, the entire verse correctly translated should read: “Everyone who has been begotten by God does not practice sin because His seed of begettal is dwelling within him, and he is not able to practice sin because he has been begotten by God.” This rendering harmonizes with the rest of John’s epistle and removes all contradictions.

The Conversion Experience and Process

Jesus said, “Many are called but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:14). Why are only few chosen? It is because the many do not respond to God’s calling. Although they hear the word, they do not yield to God. The few, who do respond, yield to God, and He begins to work with them. Jesus clearly showed this in the parable of the sower and the seed: “Therefore, hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the wicked one comes and snatches away that which was sown in his heart. This is the one who was sown by the way. Now the one who was sown upon the rocky places is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; but because he has no root in himself, he does not endure; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, he is quickly offended. And the one who was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But the one who was sown on good ground, this is the one who hears the word and understands, who indeed brings forth fruit and produces—one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold and another thirtyfold” (Matt. 13:18-23).

As a person begins to answer the call, God the Father begins to draw him. Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). The drawing of God the Father continues as long as the person continues to believe and obey the Word of God as they learn it. However, if at any time one refuses the calling and drawing of God, at some point, according to God’s determination, He does not continue to deal with that individual.

Repentance: The calling of God the Father and Jesus Christ goes out through the preaching of the Gospel and reading of the Word of God. Repentance is the first step toward responding to that call. Though it is the Holy Spirit of God that convicts and leads one to repentance (Rom. 2:4), one must choose to repent (Luke 13:1-5).

When Peter powerfully preached the Gospel, speaking of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he made it clear to all those gathered at the temple in Jerusalem on Pentecost 30 AD that their sins crucified Jesus Christ. This moved thousands to repent and to be baptized: “Therefore, let all the house of Israel know with full assurance that God has made

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this *same* Jesus, Whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ **Now after hearing *this*, they were cut to the heart**; and they said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘**Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for *the* remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all those who are afar off, as many as *the* Lord our God may call.’ And with many other words he earnestly testified and exhorted, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’ Then those who joyfully received his message were baptized; and about three thousand souls were added that day” (Acts 2:36-41). True godly repentance leads to conversion: “Therefore, repent and be converted in order that your sins may be blotted out, so that *the* times of refreshing may come from *the* presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

Baptism: The second step in responding to God’s call is water baptism. As Peter preached, the repentant believer is to be baptized. Baptism is by full immersion in water, signifying that the repentant believer is conjoined into the death of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. The apostle Paul wrote of the true meaning of baptism: “We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein? Or are you ignorant that we, **as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death?** Therefore, we were buried with Him by baptism into death; so that, just as Christ was raised from *the* dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life.

“**For if we have been conjoined together in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be in the likeness of His resurrection.** Knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified with *Him* in order **that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin**; because the one who has died *to sin* has been justified from sin. Now if we died together with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him [at the first resurrection], knowing that Christ, having been raised from *the* dead, dies no more; death no longer has any dominion over Him. For when He died, He died unto sin once for all; but in that He lives, He lives unto God. In the same way also, you should indeed reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, **do not let sin rule in your mortal body** by obeying it in the lusts thereof. Likewise, do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin; rather, yield yourselves to God **as those who are alive from the dead**, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:2-13).

Those who have been baptized are dead to living in sin as a way of life. They are to walk in newness of life and are not to let sin rule in their “mortal” bodies but fight against it, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ (II Cor. 10:4-5). Since those who have been baptized still have **mortal bodies**, it is evident that they have not been born again as a spirit being. Rather, when they receive the Holy Spirit, they have been “begotten again”—God the Father’s “seed” lives in them.

Receiving the Holy Spirit: The third step in responding to God’s call is to receive the Holy Spirit, which comes after repentance and baptism. The apostle Peter said, “Repent and be baptized ... for the remission of sins and **you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**” The gift of the Holy Spirit is given by the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-17; 19:5-6).

When one receives the Holy Spirit, he or she is begotten again and receives the “seed” of eternal life from God the Father. The apostle John wrote in I John 3:9, “Everyone who has been **begotten by God** does not practice sin because **His seed of begettal is dwelling within him**, and he is not able to *practice* sin because **he has been begotten by God.**” The Greek word for “seed” is **σπέρμα** *sperma*. This is the same word used in English for the seed of one’s natural father. The father’s sperm begets or impregnates the mother’s egg, and a new life is conceived—begotten, but not yet born. Likewise, when one receives the Holy Spirit, God the Father begets the repentant believer with His seed of eternal life and a new spiritual life is conceived—begotten, but not yet born. As long as the seed of eternal life from God the Father remains within, the believer will not habitually practice sin. God’s Spirit will convict of sin in heart and mind, leading him to repentance and restoration.

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The Parallels Between Physical and Spiritual Begetting

In the beginning when God created man He said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them: and God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:26-28).

As recounted in the first chapter of Genesis, God blessed mankind with the ability to share in His creation by bringing children into the world—actually reproducing themselves—children made in their own image. He ordained that children would be the result of love and the one flesh union between husband and wife. Thus, the human family has grown great. Likewise, God is reproducing Himself in human beings through the spiritual process of conversion that begins with repentance, baptism and the begetting of the Holy Spirit—the seed of eternal life from God the Father. Those who are faithful to the end will be born again at the first resurrection into His spiritual family—recreated in His spiritual image to share His glory and live forever.

Sealed by the Holy Spirit

How is a person “sealed” with the Holy Spirit? God the Father begets the repentant believer with the seed of eternal life through the power of the Holy Spirit, which unites with the spirit of his or her mind and they are sealed. Paul explained that the begetting of the Holy Spirit is only the earnest of the inheritance of God: “*Yes, in Him, in Whom we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestinated according to His purpose, Who is working out all things according to the counsel of His own will; that we might be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in the Christ; in Whom you also trusted after hearing the Word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation; in Whom also, after believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory*” (Eph. 1:11-14). And again, “*But He Who establishes us with you in Christ, and Who has anointed us, is God, Who has also sealed us and has given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts*” (II Cor. 1:21-22).

Begotten Again: The apostle Peter also wrote of this new begetting: “*The elect ... Who have been chosen according to the predetermined knowledge of God the Father, by sanctification through the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for us, who are being safeguarded by the power of God through faith, for salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time....For you have been begotten again, not from corruptible seed, but from incorruptible seed, by the living Word of God, which remains forever*” (I Pet. 1:1-5, 23). In the scriptures cited, Peter used the Greek word *αναγενναω anagennao* which literally means “begotten again.”

What Peter wrote concerning being begotten again is exactly what the apostle John meant when he wrote two additional comments about being begotten of God: “*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and everyone who loves Him Who begat also loves him who has been begotten by Him....We know that anyone who is begotten by God does not practice sin; for the one who has been begotten by God keeps himself by the power of God, and the wicked one does not touch him*” (I John 5:1, 18).

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Salvation Is Creation

A newly begotten child in its mother's womb is the beginning of a new creation. During the nine-month gestation period, the newly conceived infant is continually fashioned according to the pattern of the genes and chromosomes inherited from its father and mother until it is fully developed. The infant must grow physically to full term in order to be born. In the same way, a newly begotten believer must also grow spiritually in order to be born again at the resurrection. A Christian's spiritual growth produces godly character as he or she is being spiritually recreated in the image of God the Father. It is imperative for each begotten Christian to "... be growing in *the* grace and *the* knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).

Through a loving spiritual relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ by daily prayer, Bible study, and walking in the commandments of God, one grows spiritually. This new spiritual creation is the work of God the Father and Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. The believer's spiritual growth is the result of the ongoing workmanship of God: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast. **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *the* good works that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them**" (Eph. 2:8-10).

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian becomes a new person in the putting off the old carnal sinful self and ways of living and being renewed in the spirit of his or her mind. Paul wrote that God is continually at work within the heart and mind of each one He has begotten with His Spirit: "Concerning your former conduct, [that] **you put off the old man**, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; and that **you be renewed in the spirit of your mind**; and that **you put on the new man**, which according to God is **created in righteousness and holiness of the truth**" (Eph 4:22-24).

God is perfecting a marvelous new creation within each true Christian through the power of the Holy Spirit: "Therefore, **if anyone *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creation**; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (II Cor. 5:17). Paul also likens what God is doing within each begotten Christian as having "Christ formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). He wrote that the saints were given understanding of "... the mystery that has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been revealed to His saints; to whom God did will to make known what *is* the riches of **the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory**" (Col. 1:26-27).

Although God the Father and Jesus Christ are doing the perfecting work, each newly begotten child of God must submit in loving obedience. Spiritual growth takes place in the heart and mind: "I exhort you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy *and* well pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service. Do not conform yourselves to this world, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind** in order that you may prove what *is* well pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God" (Rom 12:1-2).

God continually renews the mind through the power of the Holy Spirit by writing His laws and commandments in our hearts: "And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after He had previously said, 'This *is* the covenant that I will establish with them after those days,' says *the* Lord: '**I will give My laws into their hearts, and I will inscribe them in their minds**'" (Heb. 10:15-16). This operation can be compared to an actual reprogramming of the Christian's heart and mind—the process of conversion.

True Christians who have been begotten again by the seed of eternal life from God the Father are thus being perfected. The old carnal mind and the body of sin must be put to death by the power of God's Holy Spirit: "Therefore, **put to death your members** which *are* on earth—sexual immorality, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desires, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, among whom you also once walked, when you were living in these

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things. But now, you should also put off all *these* things: wrath, indignation, malice, blasphemy, *and* foul language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, *seeing that* you have **put off the old man** together with his deeds, and have **put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge** according to *the* image of Him Who created him; where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian *nor* Scythian, slave *nor* free; but Christ *is* all things, and in all” (Col 3:5-11). And again, “For this reason, we do not lose heart; but if our outward man is being brought to decay, yet **the inward man is being renewed day by day**” (II Cor. 4:16).

In order to be overcomers, Christians must continually repent and confess their sins to God, asking for forgiveness through heartfelt prayer: “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our own sins, He is faithful and righteous, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**” (I John 1:7-9).

As stated, God the Father and Jesus accomplish the purification and cleansing of the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus uses the Word of God to cleanse the whole church because “... Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; so that He might **sanctify it, having cleansed it with the washing of water by the Word**; that He might present it to Himself *as* the glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it might be holy and without blame” (Eph. 5:25-27). The “washing of water by the Word” is accomplished through daily Bible study and prayer, coupled with the renewing of the Spirit. Paul wrote of the conversion process and renewing of the Holy Spirit: “For we also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving all kinds of lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful *and* hating one another. But when the graciousness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we practiced, but **according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration** [the washing of the water by the Word] **and the renewing of the Holy Spirit**, which He richly poured out upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior; so that, having been justified by His grace, **we would become heirs according to the hope of eternal life**” (Titus 3:3-7).

The results of the spiritual regeneration and renewal of a Christian’s mind is to have the laws and commandments of God written and inscribed upon the heart (Heb. 8:10; 10:16-17) and to grow in spiritual character to have the mind of Jesus Christ: “Now then, if *there be* any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of *the* Spirit, if any *deep* inner affections and compassions, fulfill my joy, that you be of the same mind, having the same love, being joined together in soul, minding the one thing. *Let* nothing *be* done through contention or vainglory, but in humility, each esteeming the others above himself. Let each one look not *only* after his own things, but *let* each one also *consider* the things of others. **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus**” (Phil. 2:1-5).

The Loving Correction of God: Through the circumstances of life, God the Father corrects all His begotten children. Just as children need to be corrected to learn the right way, so God corrects those whom He has received, so they may learn His way. Paul wrote: “And you have already forgotten the admonition that He addresses to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise *the* chastening of *the* Lord, nor grow weary of being reproved by Him; for whom *the* Lord loves He chastens, and He severely disciplines every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God is dealing with you as *a Father* with *His* sons. For who is the son whom *the* Father does not chasten? But if you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you are bastards and not sons.

“Furthermore, we have had our fleshly fathers who chastened *us*, and we respected *them*; should we not all the more *willingly* be subject to the Father of spirits, and live *forever*? For in the first case, they chastened *us* for a few days in whatever way seemed good to them; but in the second case, He *chastens us* for *our own* benefit that we may be partakers of His holiness. **Now truly, no chastisement for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who**

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have been exercised by it. Therefore, lift up the hands that are hanging down, and *revive* the weakened knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which *is* lame be turned aside; but let it rather be healed. Pursue peace with everyone, and sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:5-14).

Correction is an important part of Christian growth and overcoming. Correction signifies God’s love. Yielding to the correction of God brings the peaceable fruits of righteousness to create holy, righteous character, enabling one to love God even more and to grow in grace and knowledge. This is part of how God redeems His spiritual family—making each of His begotten children into a new creation.

Trials in Overcoming the World: Christians live in the world but are not part of the world. As a result, they are confronted with trials or tests of their faith. The apostle Peter wrote: “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial among you *which is* taking place to test you, as if some strange thing *were* happening to you. But to the degree that you have a share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice; so that, at the revelation of His glory, you also may rejoice exceedingly. If you are reviled for *the* name of Christ, *you are* blessed because the *Spirit* of glory and the Spirit of God is resting upon you; on their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. Assuredly, let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil doer, or as an overlording busybody in other people’s lives. Yet if anyone *is suffering* as a Christian, he should not be ashamed; but let him glorify God because of this” (I Pet. 4:12-16).

The purpose of trials is to strengthen and perfect a Christian’s faith: “In this you yourselves greatly rejoice; though for the present, if it is necessary, you are in distress for a little while by various trials; in order that the proving of your faith, which is much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is being tested by fire, may be found unto praise and honor and glory at *the* revelation of Jesus Christ; Whom, not having seen, you love; in Whom, *though* at the present time you do not see Him, you believe, *and* rejoice with unspeakable joy, and filled with glory; *and are* receiving the end of your faith—even *the* salvation of *your* souls” (I Pet. 1:6-9).

All the trials that Christians go through and endure are for the perfecting of their faith. In trials, Christians need to seek God and pray to Him, claiming His promises of deliverance and help and intervention. In spite of being faced with trials, God gives each Christian a comforting promise of deliverance, regardless of how severe a trial may be: “No temptation [trial] has come upon you except what is common to mankind. For God, Who *is* faithful, will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able *to bear*; but with the temptation, He will make a way of escape, so that you may be able to bear *it*” (I Cor. 10:13). Jesus Christ promised that He would always be with His own (Matt. 28:20), and never forsake them: “He has said, ‘In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way.’ So then, let us boldly say, ‘*The Lord is* my helper, and I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’ ” (Heb. 13:5-6).

The Persecutions and Suffering of William Tyndale

William Tyndale was the first man to translate the New Testament from the Greek into English which he published in 1526. He suffered terrible persecution at the hands of the religious and civil authorities. Finally, in 1536 he was burned at the stake for translating and printing the Word of God. As a result of his persecutions and sufferings, he wrote about the purpose of a Christian’s trials and tribulations: “This is written [the things in the Old Testament] for our learning: for verily he is a true God; and is our God as well as theirs; and his promises are with us, as well as with them; and he [is] present with us, as well as he was with them. If we ask, we shall obtain; if we knock, he will open; if we seek, we shall find; if we thirst, his truth shall fulfill our lust [desire], Christ is with us until the world’s end. Let his little flock be bold therefore. If God be on our side, what matter maketh it who be against us,

What Does It Mean to be “Born of God”?

be they bishops, cardinals, popes, or whatsoever names they will?

“Mark this also, if God send thee to the sea, and promise to go with thee, and to bring thee safe to land, he will raise up a tempest against thee, to prove whether thou wilt abide by his word, and that thou mayest feel thy faith, and perceive his goodness. For if it were always fair weather, and thou never brought into such jeopardy, whence his mercy only delivered thee, thy faith should be but a presumption, and thou shouldest be ever unthankful to God and merciless unto thy neighbour.

“If God promise riches, the way thereto is poverty. Whom he loveth, him he chasteneth: whom he exalteth, he casteth down: whom he saveth, he damneth first . . . If he promise life, he slayeth first: when he buildeth, he casteth all down first. He is no patcher; he cannot build on another man’s foundation. He will not work until all be past remedy, and be brought unto such a case, that men may see, how that his hand, his power, his mercy, his goodness and truth, hath wrought altogether. He will let no man be partaker with him of his praise and glory. His works are wonderful, and contrary unto man’s works. Who ever, saving he, delivered his own Son, his only Son, his dear Son, unto the death, and that for his enemies’ sake, to win his enemy, to overcome him with love, that he might see love, and love again, and of love to do likewise to other men, and to overcome them with well doing?” (Parker Society, *Obedience of a Christian Man*, pp. 135-136).

The apostle Paul encouraged the brethren in Rome, in spite of any trouble or suffering, always to have the promise of God’s gift of sonship in their thoughts: “For as many as are led by *the Spirit of God*, these are *the sons of God*. Now you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the Spirit of sonship*, whereby we call out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the children of God*. Now if *we are children*, *we are* also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him. **For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us**” (Rom. 8:14-18).

All the battles against sin, God’s correction, trials and tribulations, the sufferings and joys, the growing and overcoming are all a necessary part of Christian growth toward perfection in Christ: “Therefore, do not let sin rule in your mortal body by obeying it in the lusts thereof. Likewise, do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin; rather, yield yourselves to God as those who are alive from *the dead*, and your members *as instruments of righteousness to God*. For sin shall not rule over you [cannot practice sin], because you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? **MAY IT NEVER BE!** Don’t you realize that to whom you yield yourselves *as servants to obey*, you are servants of the one you obey, whether *it is* of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks *be* to God, that you were *the servants of sin*, but **you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you**; and having been delivered from sin, **you became the servants of righteousness**. I speak from a human point of view because of the weakness of your flesh; for just as you *once* yielded your members in bondage to uncleanness, and to lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now **yield your members in bondage to righteousness unto sanctification**” (Rom. 6:12-19).

As an unborn infant must come to full term in order to be born, begotten Christians are to develop and grow to full term—perfected for the first resurrection. To this end, God has given the power of His Holy Spirit, His God-breathed Word and teachers. The whole assembly of brethren and elders is called “the body of Christ,” which is the Church of God. God the Father and Jesus Christ use and inspire the ministry to perfect the saints unto the fullness of Jesus Christ: “And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers **for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ**; until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man**, unto *the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*; so that we no longer be children, tossed and carried about

Appendix M

with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in *cunning* craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error; but **holding the truth in love, may in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, even Christ** from Whom all the body, fitly framed and compacted together by *that which* every joint supplies, according to *its* inner working in *the* measure of each individual part, is making the increase of the body unto *the* edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:11-16).

The apostle John wrote that we are now the children of God—yet unborn. We are as babes in the womb, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, because the actual spiritual birth will not occur until Jesus returns—then we shall be like Him: “Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has given to us, that **we should be called the children of God!** For this very reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, **now are we the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be;** but we know that when He is manifested [at His return], **we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is.** And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure” (I John 3:1-3). This is the reason and hope that gives Christians, who have been begotten again, the strength and inspiration, the love and determination to fulfill God’s purpose in their lives.