

ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA

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Scripture: Various

“The Newness of God” (part 2)

THE ONE WHO MAKES ALL THINGS NEW

Last week we began a sermon series on the “Newness of God.” Some may wonder why such a title? There are many reasons. Our God is the God of the new. We all like new things because God put that desire in us. And when we speak of the newness of God, we are speaking of His nature. He never grows old or wears out (**Ps. 102:27-28**). He created our universe in a completely new state (**Gen. 1**). The only reason why things are breaking down and growing old is because of the fall of mankind – and the curse of decay and death that resulted (**Gen. 3**). We see God’s newness not only in His nature but in what He does after sin enters the human experience.

He promises a New Covenant (**Jer. 31:31-34; Lk. 22:19-20**) in which sin will be eternally dealt with a mankind restored through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ gives us a New Birth – literally a new life of purpose and meaning and one that is eternal (**1 Peter 1:3**). We are not only promised a new life but New Supernatural Bodies that are literally resurrected and transformed bodies of our earthly body (**1 Cor. 15:35-49**). And God says He will make a New Heaven and a New Earth where we will dwell.

JESUS IS THE ONE WHO HAS MADE ALL THINGS NEW IN THIS LIFE

As a result, we can sing a New Song! Just like we hear the people of God do in many of the Psalms and also as we hear the four living creatures and 24 elders do so in **Rev. 5** and the saints in **Rev. 14**. ***“They sang a new song.”***

But while we talked about *what* is the newness of God last week, what I would like to do today is look at how can we experience it in this life. Please turn with me to **Mt. 9:14-17**: ***“Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?” 15And Jesus said to them, “The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16“But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. 17“Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.”***

Jesus is speaking of Himself. He is the new wine. The Mosaic covenant and the laws of ritual, sacrifice, and diet are no longer necessary. Jesus will now be with us and we will be able to reach God through Him personally. We will have a new orientation when it comes to life, and we will have a new direction and a new purpose. Jesus said in **Jn. 10:10**, ***“I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.”*** When one thinks of abundant life, it means “lots of life”– it is not a life of scarcity or going downhill and not having enough. It is a life full of purpose, meaning, and hope. As we mentioned last

week, God’s newness is reflected in our future. We have hope; and when you have hope, you can get through any dark or difficult time.

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF CHRIST IS THE KEY

So to experience the newness of God, I need to know the One through whom all things are new – the Lord Jesus Christ. But how do we experience the Lord Jesus Christ personally? Through His Holy Spirit – the new birth is being born again through the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, unless one is born again you can’t enter the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus asked how can one be born again? Jesus then said we have to be born of water and the spirit. The water represented our baptism – and what aspect of our baptism? – repentance of our sin – we go under the water to die to self and to identify with the hope of the resurrection through the resurrected Christ. And the Spirit indicates that our regeneration is by and through the Spirit, and our ongoing walk with Christ is through the Holy Spirit. Do you remember what Jesus said on the night before He died? I will send you another comforter to be with you forever. He will take from Me and disclose it to you. He will guide you into all truth.

He will also be God’s power source in us to accomplish the work God has given us to do and to work in us God’s will of transforming us to be like Christ. Now in order to experience God’s newness, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit – on a daily basis – every day. It’s why Paul says in Ephesians ***“do not be drunk with wine but be filled with the Holy Spirit.”*** So how does the infilling of the Holy Spirit renew us?

WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SOUL AND THE SPIRIT?

We begin to find the answer in **1 Thess. 5:23**. Please turn there with me to see what Paul says concerning us. He prays ***“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** To sanctify means to be set apart for God and His purposes. And the *entirely* refers to us completely – spirit, soul and body. And that is what God is going to do at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ when our spirit and soul are reunited with our transformed physical body. So you see, the Bible reveals that every human being is a unity of three parts – body, soul, and spirit.

Notice what Paul begins with – *our spirit*. That is what is most important, because it is the spirit of the man that will determine the destiny of his soul and body. Now, often times people confuse spirit with soul. Part of the problem is that they are used at times interchangeably in the Bible so they seem to refer to the same thing. And that is because they are inextricably linked together – you can’t have one without the other and yet they are different. You can separate the spirit and soul from the body, but you can’t separate the soul and the spirit of a man. Both the soul and the spirit direct our bodies, but our bodies can never direct our soul or spirit.

Why is that? Our bodies are just that - bodies – without the spirit and the soul they are lifeless, they are dead. But not so the soul and the spirit. Recall what Jesus said in **Mt. 10:28**, ***“Don’t fear the One who can kill the body, but fear the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell.”*** So what is the difference? The soul comprises who we are as a person mentally and emotionally – it is our personality and the capacity to be human in being able to think and create and reason and communicate. But the spirit

involves our will as it pertains to life and its relationships and its purposes and its meaning. For example, our soul is involved with taking in information and learning and coming to conclusions as it pertains to the physical world. The soul decides to brush the teeth because that is a good thing to do to prevent cavities. The soul may really like to play basketball or love to play the piano. It makes basic decisions for everyday life, and many of those decisions even reflect the unique personality of the person – his or her likes and dislikes. The spirit, on the other hand, makes decisions pertaining how one relates to others and to God. The spirit in us determines how selfish or selfless we will be. The spirit in us determines who we will hang around with, what will be the treasure in our lives, and what will we seek after for purpose and meaning. So in many respects, the spirit is what drives the soul and the body, and yet the soul – that is our mind and emotions – can affect the spirit as well. Again, because the spirit and the soul are inextricably linked together, they influence each other. Let’s now look at God’s Word to gain further insight.

BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE SPIRIT AND MIND OF CHRIST

Now turn with me to **2 Cor. 4:13-18**. The Apostle Paul writes *“But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, **“I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE,”** we also believe, therefore we also speak, 14knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. 15For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. 16Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

There are three things we learn here that are keys to experiencing the newness of God. First, it comes through a spirit of faith – that is trusting the Spirit of God and His Word. You see, belief begins in the mind, but faith involves the spirit. When we have a spirit of faith, it is not only saying we believe, but we trust. Many people believe but few trust. A spirit of faith says I am going to take the step beyond belief and I am going to live my life now in a particular perspective – God’s perspective. And that is why Paul talks about the inner man. Our newness is first and foremost internal – our newness comes from the inside out, not the outside in. That’s the second point - our souls and our spirit must be renewed even as our physical bodies and the world around us are breaking down. And third, we have to go about it daily. It is a daily endeavor – which in turn parallels Paul’s words in **Eph. 5:18** to be daily filled with the Holy Spirit.

Please turn to **1 Cor. 2:10-16**: *For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.*

14But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15But he who is spiritual

appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

So we see that man in his natural fallen state has the spirit of the world in him. The only way his spirit can be transformed is by the Holy Spirit. And when we have the Holy Spirit, we now can gain entrance into the mind of Christ; and that means for those who have the Spirit of Christ (and you do have Him if you are born again) will be open to not only hearing from Christ but learning from Him as well. So if the gateway to the will is through the spirit of the man, then the gateway to the spirit of the man is through what the mind takes in first – because the spirit has to have something to work with. And so the pattern of renewal, and of spiritual rebirth and growth is to believe in our minds and trust in our spirit. And if our spirit is going to be transformed, then it has to have the knowledge and experience of the Lord’s Spirit. And so again we have the soul and the spirit working together – back and forth.

Let’s look at a couple more Scriptures that bear this out. Paul writes in **Romans 12:2**: ***“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*** Now what is he talking about here? Exercising our minds? Reading lots of books or doing a bunch of math problems? No, of course not. Paul is not talking about renewing our minds with the things of this world. Our minds can only be renewed by the things of God. And our minds are renewed so that we prove the will of God. The Greek word that we translate in the English as “prove,” means to discern through testing – through putting it into practice. So again the renewal begins in the mind so that we can trust in the spirit and move forward in our bodies. And the way to renew the mind is first through God’s Word, but it also includes prayer and praises - singing and listening to songs that glorify the Lord. It means also reflecting on all the good things God has done and is doing in your life as well as remembering the future God has for us. Those are all ways to be filled with the Spirit of God – they are all ways of seeing our inner man renewed daily. I heard on the radio the other day a great suggestion for how to remember how blessed we are throughout the year. The suggestion was to get a jar and at the end of each week write down one good thing that happened to you during that week. Then at the end of the year on New Year’s Eve to open the jar and go through and read them all again.

What goes into our mind will affect our spirit, and our spirit will affect our physical body – with good or bad choices. It is why Paul writes in **Philippians 4:8** ***Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*** If we want to experience the peace of God, then we need to make sure our focus is on the Lord!

And yet, it is not enough to renew our minds by what we focus on; we also need to conscientiously do something with those things that are not of the Lord. Please turn now to **2 Cor. 10:3-5**: ***“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,”***

That means we need to shoot down thoughts and ideas that are contrary to God’s Word and will. Ideas such as the guilt of your past, or the bitterness of your past. Things like worry, fear, and doubt. Cast them out. Unforgiveness, selfishness, and pride – cast them out. When Peter came to Jesus and insisted He didn’t need to have to suffer and die, do you remember what Jesus said to him? He said, **“Get behind Me Satan.”** Why? He knew that Satan was using Peter to create a false narrative, but it wasn’t just a lie; it was a temptation for Jesus to take a shortcut. The devil time and time again, tried to get the Lord to forgo the cross, to just skip it. Hey Lord, you don’t have to suffer, you don’t have to die. I mean, come on! You are the Lord of heaven and earth. The Almighty One. You can do all things. You don’t have to do it. But of course, Jesus had to do it – not just to demonstrate His everlasting and unconditional love, but to be faithful to the holiness and righteousness of God.

You see, if our mind is right and our spirit is right, then what we do in the body will be right. Do you remember how Paul said that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Our bodies don’t cause us to sin. Our bodies don’t even technically commit sin. It is like a gun. A gun does not kill people; it is the person who uses the gun who kills. Likewise, our bodies are simply the expression of our spirit and soul.

It is why Jesus said concerning eating the right foods, ***it is not what goes into our bodies that defiles us it is what comes out of the heart – out of the spirit of the man - that defiles our bodies.*** And yet, when Paul writes that our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, we are called to take care of them. We can’t expect to fully experience the newness of God if we are not getting enough rest, drinking enough water, eating healthy foods, and exercising. A healthy body will definitely help our soul and spirit.

So to recap, to experience the newness of God means to make sure that we are being filled with His Holy Spirit day by day. And the primary way we are filled with the Holy Spirit is by renewing our minds day by day with God’s Word, by speaking and listening to the Lord, singing and hearing praises to our God, dwelling and thinking about the goodness of God and the wonder of His creation, what He has done, is doing, and what He will do. And by not harboring grudges or an unforgiving spirit. But it also means taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ and not just casting it down but replacing it with a godly thought and action. Satan wants the old man to not only rear his ugly head he wants to revive the old man in us. But the problem is the old man is already dying, there is no reason to go back there, and more importantly if we are in Christ, the old man has been crucified with Christ. He has been put to death. It’s why Paul wrote in **Galatians 2:20**, ***“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”*** And then in **2 Cor. 5:17**, ***“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”***

That, my brothers and sisters, is why we can experience the newness of God each and every day. And such newness simply prepares us for the eternal newness of God that awaits every believer. As the prophet Jeremiah declared in **Lamentations 3:22-23**, ***“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning, great is thy faithfulness.”*** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!