

# Principles of the Heart: Growth of New Life in Us

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All Christians are concerned with change, or at least should be. Change for the Christian starts with one's basic approach to life from being a selfish person alienated from God to a repentant follower of Christ. A person is brought to this point of basic life change by God's grace through the wooing power of the Holy Spirit. The question arises, "How does change occur thereafter for a follower of Christ?" Interestingly, most Christians view Christian growth much the same way they view human behavioral change in general. The only difference involves different goals and objectives. In their view the actual change, or what actually happens inside us, is the same as when we make other decisions that become habits or 'ways of life'. The decision to receive Christ as Savior and follow Him as Lord is viewed like any other decision that involves life direction and commitment.

There are people all over this world who want little to do with God but who are not in prison or the welfare lines but are contributing members of society. Felons, addicts, and once manipulative people cease to be so and live new and different lives because they become convinced that they need to change. Some individuals who are in rehab programs who have hit bottom have made decisions to change because continuing on their present life course has become too painful and debilitating. Some individuals who are not born rich but who want to be financially stable and have a family look around and find that hard work and responsible behavior usually pays off with success so they commit themselves to hard work and responsibility. Many troublesome kids or teenagers who are not religious or have little interest in becoming so still grow up to be responsible adults because they see that as the best pathway to success in life. This type of change happens on a daily basis.

But is Christian change like this? Does becoming godly and loving (agape), Christlike, occur the same way one becomes temperate or prudent, two of Aristotle's cardinal virtues? Is 'achieving' Christlikeness merely a matter of gritting our teeth and following His example—straining human effort? Or is more involved?

Concerning Christian change, this writer believes that investigation of New Testament evidence will reveal that Christian change involves more than human effort but creationary completeness and growth. Growth is the unfolding of an already existing organism into itself, i.e. its maturity. It is the thesis of this paper that Christian change is based on the growth of God's creative act within the interior part, not the self-reformation or self-transformation of what is called the old man (Colossians 3:5-9) or old self (Romans 6:6). The New Testament teaches us that Christlikeness is not accomplished by human effort or ingenuity but it is a gift of God.

The old man, or our old pre-salvation self, is commanded to be mortified in Colossians 3:5. Mortified means to deaden,<sup>[1]</sup> or to bring to inactivity. Nowhere is the Christian told in Scripture that this old man is going to be eradicated. Nor is the Christian told to transform or reform the old man--to 'evolve' him. As a matter of fact, Ephesians 4:22 states that "he" is growing more corrupt according to "his" deceitful lusts (or passions). He is going down not up. It is what was crucified at the cross of Christ (Romans 6:6 and Galatians 5:24). And we are told to no longer live in "him" (Ephesians 4:22). The flesh described in Galatians 5:24 as being crucified in its passions and desires refers to humankind's sinful, selfish, God-opposed nature. The crucified old self of Romans 6:6 and crucified old man of Ephesians 4:22 and Colossians 3:9 refer to the construct built on the flesh.

Second Corinthians 5:17 directly states that all who are in Christ (believers) are new creations: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new." Thayer's Greek-English lexicon defines this word for creation as: the

act of creating, founding, establishing.[2] The Greek word "new" in 2 Corinthians 5:17 refers to new in quality, not just new in time.[3] And "have become" is the perfect, indicative tense of "to be." The new thing has completely arrived on the scene. It is here now.

Four passages deal with the furtherance or growth of this newness--Ephesians 4:20-24, Romans 6:1-9, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and 1 Peter 2:2-3. Ephesians 4 starts out in verse 1 by stating Paul's purpose: "I (Paul), therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling which you were called." Paul's purpose is to exhort a walk (life style, life activities) worthy of being called a follower of Christ (v. 13). By the time Paul gets to verse 20 he has stated Christlike characteristics, how God has planned to bring these characteristics out of believers, and the character of the former walk and disposition of all unbelievers.

"But you have not so learned Christ," Paul says in verse 20, "if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus" --meaning, if indeed you are true believers and followers of Jesus. True followers of Christ are to put off the former conduct of the old man described in verse 22 as corrupting according to its deceitful lusts. "Put off" means to remove from oneself, used elsewhere in Greek of removing clothes from the body [4] --to remove and then lay aside fits the idea well. The "former conduct" is the former manner of life, living, or behavior. The word designating corruption of the old man is a Greek verb that means destroy or corrupt,[5] which is a present, passive participle. This means that the old man is corrupting in and of himself because of his deceitful lusts or passions. Paul doesn't advise doing anything to this old man except to put him off--remove him.

In verses 23 and 24 Paul does tell us how to walk worthy of Christ, or how to change from the old man conduct. He says to renew the mind and put on (the opposite of put off) the new man. To renew the mind is more than intellectual belief. A truly renewed mind must seek the center of all relevant Christlike knowledge. All such knowledge must reach down to the newness within--the righteous and holy center of our interior part (v. 24). But even this is not complete. For unless after truth's journey within, truth journeys back out in our attitudes and behavior, it will not further the new man. Verses 25ff speak to this outward journey.

Notice in verse 24 that the new man is already there. He has been created. The "was created" is an aorist, passive participle. Pointing to the simple fact that the creation has already been done. No information as to how or how long it took, just the fact that the creation of the new man is done. This is an important fact. For the material for the renewal will find something already present to connect with. The word for "be renewed" is a present, passive infinitive. In other words, the renewing occurs based on the reaction of the renewal material and the new man. This does not imply that Christian change is a passive experience. Second Peter 1:5-7 makes it clear that the Christian has an active part in growth. But Ephesians 4 makes it equally clear that true godly change only comes from God and His work in us.

Ephesians 4:24 says that Christians should "put on" a certain newness. Romans 6:4 instructs us to walk in newness of life. Ephesians 4:24 uses "new" in new man as an adjective. Romans 6:4 uses the same root word as a noun in either the instrumental or locative case. "To walk" simply means life style, conduct, behavior. Regardless of how one understands "new" in Romans 6:4, as either instrumental or locative case, the fact remains that we as Christians are to walk in accordance with the newness (this is a noun entity--it is something not just an idea). If "new" is instrumental then it would read "by newness" or "with newness." The idea would be that one moves with this newness--you and it move together. If "new" is locative then it would read "in newness." In whatever this newness is we are to move. Both create a mental picture of how one moves in relation to newness. Which one is correct may be a matter of opinion. Neither changes the fact of newness' presence.

"Newness" is followed by another noun in the genitive case. This noun, "life," is most likely a genitive of possession. Genitives are quite often seen with a strong adjectival flavor. As a matter

of fact, a genitive has a more emphatic adjectival force than a simple adjective.[6] The idea here then is kind of newness--life's newness.

Romans 6:1-4a conveys the fact that for the Christian absolute bondage to sin should be a thing of the past. The possibility of living contrary to the sin within is present. Verse 4b completes the idea unto living for life. Verses 5-9 explain further why this living for life is possible. It is possible because of the work of Christ on the cross and in resurrection. And His application of those acts to the believing heart. Verses 10-23 tell in further detail how this "living" is to take place. We need not look at these verses in detail. But we do need to see that we are to reject "deadness" and walk in "liveness." The life that is new (quality) to us.

What happens when we walk in this life that is new to us? Our next major verse, 2 Corinthians 3:18, tells us. The context for our discussion of verse 18 goes back to verse 7 and proceeds forward to 4:10. Verses 7-17 basically describe the inability of mere law keeping to cause Christlikeness in a person. When Moses received the law tablets from God's "hand" he came away reflecting God's glory in the brightness of his face. But the glory faded from his face because there was nothing within him to sustain the glow. Moses recognized this fact about himself and covered his face out of shame. He knew the law could not bring life. Most of the people however never understood the connection, and so continued to worship the law rather than God.

In Christ (salvation and all that means) this blindness is taken away. One knows that law keeping is inadequate to gain life and then only by the grace of Christ is life received. But there is more. For in Christ the believer can, to a degree, sustain the glory of the Lord Moses could not. And that is what verse 18 is all about. The believer with an open, unveiled face sees the Lord's glory (which is seen in all His attributes and acts) by living toward all His works in praise and practice.

As this "living" takes place, verse 18 says that we are "transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Transformed" simply means changed in form.[7] Our entire being changes. Unlike the law, which did not change Moses, for the glory faded from him, the changing of the unveiled, beholding ones is real and lasting. The change is said to be "from glory to glory." Both words translated "glory" come from the same root word. The glory, whatever it is, in both cases is the same--the same type of glory to the same type of glory. The quality of the glory is the same. It does not say changing from a lower grade of something to a higher grade of something. But the changing is within "gloriness," only a fuller, more mature representation of it. This "within gloriness" idea is supported further by the case of the first "glory" and the preposition that precedes it. Both are in the ablative case--the case of source or point of departure.[8] The preposition is "from" in Greek. In other words, movement is from glory. One is already in glory before movement occurs.

The changing is based on already present glory and empowered "by the Spirit of the Lord." Second Corinthians 4:1-10 continues to explain the Lord's part in the furtherance of this glory and why suffering and hardship plays a part in its manifestation. This change is understood to be growth of an already existing life, glory, or new man. All are descriptions of the same phenomena but from different viewpoints. Life is contrasted with death, glory with darkness, and new man with old man. The creationary concept of change entails growth of that which is created. Growth that then infiltrates all that we are, think, and do.

First Peter 2:1-5 and 14 speak to what is a prerequisite for growth. Before the new life that is in us can blossom into Christlikeness we must first "lay aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking;" or in terms we have used already, "put off the old man with his deeds." Verse 1 is a prerequisite for verse 2. The idea is "lay aside the old man, mortify him (Colossians 3:5), so that as the newborn babes you are, desire the pure milk of the Word [of God], that you may grow thereby." John MacArthur puts it this way: "Only when we put aside 'malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander'--that is, the flesh--are we able to [1] 'long for the pure milk of the word' and [2] 'grow in respect to salvation'." [9]

The word "grow" means to increase, grow up.[10] Taking into the desiring heart the grace of God results in growth. "That you may grow thereby" is a clause of result. Clauses can emphasize either purpose or result. This writer thinks that the result idea fits best here due to the context and data already gained from 2 Corinthians 3:18. Change or growth occurs as a result of God's grace through His design. Growth is completing itself as the Christian lives out the Word of God in relationship with God.

Ephesians 4:20-24, Romans 6:1-9, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and I Peter 2:1ff say much to support the creationary concept of change, but there are other verses that hint at such a truth. This writer will briefly mention a few. First Timothy 6:12, 18, 19 speaks of eternal life that is to be grabbed a hold of now, which is done by richness of good works (truly good works and eternal life are moving in the same environment and direction). First John 3:15 states that no murderer has (present, indicative) now eternal life abiding within him. Implying that others do have eternal life abiding within now. Romans 5:5 reveals that the love of God has (perfect, passive, indicative) already been poured out into, and thus dwells within, believing hearts. Second Peter 1:1 states that believers have received (aorist, active, participle) like precious, or equally precious, faith with the apostles. Second Peter 1:5-7 tells us to add to the like precious faith already received that we might grow thereby. Or as 2 Peter 1:4 puts it, "that we may be partakers of the divine nature." Jude 20-21 say that we as Christians are to build ourselves up on the most holy faith already present by praying in the Holy Spirit (faith), keeping ourselves in the love of God (love), and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life (hope). Galatians 5:6 informs us that only faith working through love is of any force unto true change, not works of the flesh (such as circumcision [simply doing something] or uncircumcision [simply not doing something]). And finally Ephesians 4:3 commands us to keep the already given unity of the Spirit that there might be unity in the church.

If the analysis I have done above is accurate, then it has been established that being born again entails something new happening within us. Something new that involves more than the internal presence of the Holy Spirit. We have been given a new capacity to know and walk with God. Ezekiel 36:26 promises a new heart with new and right desires. "And I will give you a new heart with new and right desires, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony heart of sin and give you a new, obedient heart." Being born-again fulfills that promise. But more is needed to help us conceptualize how Christlikeness comes out of us. For help I turn to Thomas Traherne.

Traherne lived in England in the seventeenth century. He was a pastor in the Anglican Church. His view of the Christian life was unique during his day. Knowing that he grew up experiencing war, violence, and bloodshed, makes his optimistic, peaceful philosophy all the more remarkable. This gives witness to the effects that his contemplative philosophy had on his life. Thomas Traherne greatly desired to be a blessing to mankind [11]. He desired that each person please God, and so "to enable [one] to please God is the highest service a man can do" (Meditation #1.11, from Thomas Traherne's Centuries). He believed that he was called of God to show men and women how they can know and please God. He saw his life as a living illustration [12] of what all humans can experience (Meditation #3.1). Traherne's key concepts are felicity and contemplation. His knowledge and experience of felicity encompass what he saw as his gift to mankind. Felicity, a gift from God, is the end and God-centered contemplation and Christian service are the means.

Traherne's Centuries will be the main focus of this section. With Centuries this writer hopes to convey Traherne as the happy man of God he was. In Traherne's quest to expose the nature and benefits of felicity he has recorded some of the greatest prose writings in the English language. C.S. Lewis said of Traherne's Centuries: "[it is] almost the most beautiful book. . .in English." [13]

Felicity by definition means bliss. To Traherne, however, it is more than just a state of blissful happiness: "...it is simply the wellspring from which all that is good and natural flows." [14] *It is that holy happiness that results in godly and Christlike living.* It is not mere psychological

contentment that follows satisfied desire or want. It is an inner centeredness that is grounded in Christ.

Humans can experience felicity—the inner wellspring from which all that is good and Christlike flows—because God has created them in His own image (Meditation #2.23). It is their gift from God. "To enjoy the treasures of God in the similitude of God, is the most perfect blessedness God could devise" (Meditation #3.59). By giving humans this capacity (Meditation #1.99), God has honored them above all creatures: "It is no blasphemy to say that God cannot make a God: the greatest thing that He can make is His image: a most perfect creature, to enjoy the most perfect treasures, in the most perfect manner" (Meditation #3.61). Traherne also points out that its full potential will not be realized until heaven: "Here upon Earth perhaps where our estate is imperfect this is impossible [full experience of felicity in the image of God]: but in Heaven where the soul is all Act it is necessary. . . . Here it is to rejoice in what it may be" (Meditation #2.73).

Although the journey's end is found in heaven's eternity, it starts in this life. Traherne's whole system is based on his belief that humans are capable of knowing God in a personal way. Traherne's God is not the God of the deists, who believed that God created the world but then distanced Himself from personal contact with that world. Felicity is his epistemological answer to the question of how a person can know God (Meditation #2.21). And his practical answer to the question of how a person can move toward godliness (Meditation #2.22). Unlike Calvin's "signs and tokens," [15] Traherne's felicity really gives one a personal glimpse of God (Meditation #3.66). Real personal knowledge of God is possible because God has made it possible in felicity—inner blessedness that results in Christlikeness.

Traherne's second major concept is contemplation of God. Thought must be clothed with understanding before its power contributes to felicity (Meditation #2.76). And that is the function of contemplation. In understanding, a soul can walk with Adam, Enoch, Noah, Moses, Aaron and Solomon and be benefited by all toward felicity (Meditation #1.55). But to Traherne the chief and most profitable object of contemplation is the cross of Christ.

To Traherne, the cross is where all virtues are found (Meditation #1.61). It is the center of eternity, the throne of delights, "that tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God" (Meditation #1.55). "The cross is the abyss of wonders, the centre of desires, the school of virtues, the house of wisdom, the throne of love, the theatre of joy, and the place of sorrows; it is the root of happiness, and the gate of heaven" (Meditation #1.58). Through understanding thoughts one can climb "Jacob's ladder" (Meditation #1.60) and enter into its treasures.

When one looks at the cross one sees God in Christ most clearly. It is here that love is seen for what it is. Read closely the words of Thomas Traherne:

"Is this He that was transfigured upon Mount Tabor? Pale, withered, extended, tortured, soiled with blood, and sweat, and dust, dried, parched! O sad, O dismal spectacle! All His joints are dissolved, all His blood is shed, to the last drop, all His moisture is consumed! What is here but a heap of desolations, a deformed carcass, a disfigured countenance! A mass of miseries and silence, footsteps of innumerable sufferings! Can this be a joy? Can this be an entertainment? Can this delight us? O Jesus, the more vile I here behold Thee, the more I admire Thee. Into what low abysses didst Thou descend, in what depths of misery dost Thou now lie! Oh what confusions, what stripes and wounds, what desolations and deformities didst Thou suffer for our sakes! In all the depths of thy humiliation I here adore thee! I prize and desire always to see those stripes and those deformities. It is sweeter to be with Thee in thy sufferings, than with princes on their Thrones, and more do I rejoice with Thee in Thy misery, than in all their solemnities. I tremble also to see thy condescensions, the great effects and expressions of Thy love! Thou wast slain for me: and shall I leave Thy body in the field, O Lord? Shall I go away and be merry, while the Love of my soul is dead upon the cross. Groans, here, in the sight and apprehension of thy love are beyond all melody, and the solemn sorrows of a loving Soul, a faithful friend, a tender Spouse, a deep and compassionate true Lover, beyond all the entertainments in the world. Thine

O Jesus will I ever be while I have any Being" (Meditation # 1.89)

The kind of love that moved Jesus to endure the suffering of the Cross moved Traherne to praise and wonder at such a God as would do this for him. Traherne understood.

Traherne said this about being born again:

"Our Savior's meaning, when he said, [we] must be born again and become a little child that will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven is far deeper than is generally believed. It is not only in a careless reliance upon Divine Providence (trust), that we are to become little children, or in the feebleness and shortness of our anger and simplicity of our passions, but in the peace and purity of all our soul. Which purity also is a deeper thing than is commonly apprehended. For we must dissolve ourselves of all false colours, and unclothe our souls of evil habits; all our thoughts must be infant-like and clear; and disentangled from men's conceits and customs. Grit in the eye or yellow jaundice will not let a man see those objects truly that are before it. And therefore it is requisite that we should be very strangers to the thoughts, customs, and opinions of men in this world, as things would appear to us only which do to children when they are first born" (Meditation #3.5).

Thomas Traherne believed that God made humans for relationship with Himself. He believed that humans could actually touch the heart of God and that God was not a distant Being, but that He desires intimate contact with humans. And the ultimate proof of this, according to Traherne, was the appearance of Jesus Christ, God's Son, in the affairs of men and women. He showed up on the human scene to experience our wounds and release us from bondage to sin. Traherne wants us to know that God cares and that He loves us. A heart that truly knows this will be moved toward felicity, or holy happiness. And from this holy happiness, this internal blessedness, flows Christlikeness.

Thomas Traherne's teachings are truly insightful. In keeping with his own teaching concerning the definition of a true philosopher being one who does as well as thinks (Meditation #4.8), he lived his doctrine. He was not perfect by his own admission (Meditation #4.30), but the testimony of some who knew him personally testify to a devout, happy, godly man [16]. Contrast Traherne's heart with Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* ("I would rather rule in hell, than serve in heaven"): "I choose rather in a cave to serve Thee, than on a throne to despise thee" (Meditation #1.88). Traherne was a good man because he thirsted after a good God--felicity.

If all of the above is true, then why is the Christian life such a struggle? And where do the 'human' virtues figure into all this? Speaking logically, the answer to the first question appears to be threefold: 1) we do not fully "put off" the old man, 2) we have too many internal and external distractions, and 3) we are not actually "beholding" God for who He is.

The answer to the second question is more complex. Again, Traherne can help us. Read carefully a long quote—it is worth the effort.

"Felicity is a thing coveted of all. The whole world is taken with the beauty of it: and he is not man, but a stock or stone that does not desire it. Nevertheless great offence hath been done by the philosophers and scandal given, through their blindness, many of them, in making Felicity to consist in negatives. They tell us it doth not consist in riches, it doth not consist in honors, it doth not consist in pleasures. Wherein then, saith a miserable man, doth it consist? Why in contentment, in self-sufficiency, in virtues, in the right government of our passions &c. Were it not better to show the amiableness of virtues, and the benefit of the right government of our passions, the objects of contentment, and the grounds of self-sufficiency, by the truest means? Which these never do. Ought they not to distinguish between true and false riches as our Saviour doth; between real and feigned honors, between clear and pure pleasures and those which are muddy and unwholesome? The honor that cometh from above, the true treasures, those rivers of pleasure that flow at his right hand for evermore, are by all to be sought and by all to be desired.

For it is the affront of nature, a making vain the powers, and a baffling the expectations of the soul, to deny it all objects, and a confining it to the grave, and a condemning of it to death, to tie it to the inward unnatural mistaken self-sufficiency and contentment they talk of. By the true government of our passions, we disentangle them from impediments, and fit and guide them to their proper objects. The amiableness of virtue consisteth in this, that by it all happiness is either attained or enjoyed. Contentment and rest ariseth from a full perception of infinite treasures. So that whosoever will profit in the mystery of Felicity, must see the objects of his happiness, and the manner how they are to be enjoyed, and discern also the powers of his soul by which he is to enjoy them, and perhaps, the rules that shall guide him in the way of enjoyment. All which you have here, God, the world, yourself, all things in time and eternity being the objects of your Felicity, God the Giver, and you the receiver” (Meditation # 2.100).

The virtues are all about the proper expression and management of the human passions and desires. For without true moral virtue the capacity for full contemplation, or beholding, of God will be greatly diminished or non-existent. Without the calming and quieting effect that the virtues have on our passions and actions, there can be no real, soul-inspiring, soul-purifying contemplation. That is why Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:5 that the first thing that is added to our life after the gift of living faith is virtue or moral excellence. Without this the rest of the Christian life becomes stunted, diminished.

I want to look at this 2 Peter passage more closely. I am not going to take the time to break down this passage. I do not have to. I think all I have to do is quote two different versions of 2 Peter 1:2-9 to highlight how misunderstanding can occur and how I think the process really works. First I want to quote the King James Version.

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises: that through these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, *add* to your faith, virtue; to virtue [add] knowledge; to knowledge [add] self-control; to self-control [add] perseverance; to perseverance [add] godliness; to godliness [add] brotherly kindness; to brotherly kindness [add] charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”

In this version the reader gets the sense that the Christian is to add pieces or phases to the Christian life one step at a time until finally Christlikeness is achieved. All the “adds” make it appear as if human effort is the key component of the whole process. It sounds as if human effort, straining human effort, is key to producing Christlikeness. I think many people think of this process in that way. But there is a difference in thinking that straining human effort is needed for the formation of the human virtues as the passions and desires are ordered rightly and thinking that Christlikeness is achieved by straining human effort.

The other version I want to highlight is the New Living Translation. Read the passage closely and notice a different feel to the process.

“May God bless you with his special favor and wonderful peace as you come to know Jesus, our God and Lord, better and better. As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. He has called us to receive his own glory and goodness! And by that same mighty power, he has given us all of his rich and wonderful promises. He has promised that you will escape the decadence all around you caused by evil desires and that you will share in his divine nature. So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to

patient endurance. Patient endurance leads to godliness. Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more you will become productive and useful in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop these virtues are blind or, at least, very shortsighted. They have already forgotten that God has cleansed them from their old life of sin.”

Do you catch the sense that God is working out a process in us as we focus on Him and His ways? The sense of this translation fits what Traherne told us about felicity and contemplation. We have to seek and focus our attention and actions toward Him and His ways but it is God who is the producer of Christlikeness in us. The more we see Him for who He is, the more we will become like Him (1 John 3:2 and 1 Corinthians 13:12). This capacity for felicity is what is new to us. It is what has been born in us at our new birth. It is new life in us.

Looking at ourselves this way is no small matter. The difference that it will produce in our passions and behaviors will be life transforming. It seems to be so different from how the modern church sees itself. From what one sees and hears from most professing Christians throughout America and Europe, the West, one gets the sense that Christlikeness is produced much the same way other habitual or way-of-life behaviors are produced. The Christian life is seen more as an ethical system rather than as a source of spiritual life and relationship with God.

Christianity has lost its uniqueness and its power. David Kupelian correctly states, “Many thoughtful analysts say the church today is more in need of overhaul than it was at the time of the Protestant Reformation.”[17] I submit the reason we have come to this point is because we have lost sight of what God has done in us at the initial moment of salvation—at our new birth. And being ignorant of the new life in us, that new man created in us, the capacity for felicity, or holy happiness, that inner blessedness that springs forth into peace, joy, and Christlikeness is stunted before it can grow in us.

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