



Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage!

Welcome to the second issue of *The Awakening!* This issue contains articles by four Amish bishops, all of whom have rediscovered their spiritual heritage and, like their Anabaptist ancestors, have been born again by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-10). Their hope and prayer is that every Amish reader would also experience the blessing of the new birth of which Jesus spoke (as recorded in John 3:1-21). That is why they have contributed articles for this issue. All four are living an Amish lifestyle. Some have included their mailing addresses (and in some cases, their phone numbers) so that you can communicate with them if you so desire.

The first issue of *The Awakening!*, published in April of this year, was received in the mailboxes of about 62,000 Amish households.

We received many encouraging and loving responses, and it feels so good to have wonderful Amish friends all over the country. Together, Amish readers sent over \$8,000 in donations to help us print and mail the next issue that you are holding in your hands. Many readers wrote to request that we add their friends and relatives to our mailing list, which we have, and many requested English New Testaments, complete Bibles, and biblically-based articles that we offered to send for free to anyone who requested them.

The most encouraging responses were those from Amish people who have been born again and whose lives have been changed by the Holy Spirit. We have included a few of their letters in this issue.

Since the last issue of *The Awakening!*, Jonas Kurtz, a former

Amish minister from Johnsonburg, PA, has been traveling to visit and encourage some newly-born-again Amish families in various parts of the country, including even some Swartzentruber Amish families in the Midwest. God is working in Amish communities all over North America, and we are learning about more of them all the time.

As with our first issue, I ask that you please do not yield to suspicion that our goal is to alter Amish culture, about which there are so many good qualities. Rather, our goal is to help sincere Amish folks recover their Anabaptist spiritual heritage and be born again—as were their ancestors hundreds of years ago.

We believe that those who have genuinely repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are forgiven of all their former sins,

and they are empowered by the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus and obey His commandments. To that end, this issue also contains a teaching article titled, “Two Kinds of Righteousness.” One of those kinds is what the New Testament refers to as “the gift of righteousness.” It comes through being born again. I hope that article is a blessing to you.

Also as with our first issue, a secondary goal (that naturally follows the first goal), is to re-unify and reconcile Amish families that have been divided. We believe that all of those who name the name of Christ should be striving to follow Christ’s commandments, one of which is to love one another, and thus we should extend love and respect to those who adhere to differing convictions on matters concerning which the Bible is silent or variously interpreted by other sincere followers of Christ. Heaven will be filled only with followers of Christ, but they will come in many varieties and flavors!

This issue of *The Awakening!* has cost us about \$47,000 to print and mail. All of that has been paid by generous donations from Amish, ex-Amish and “English” people, all of whom have been born again and who hope and pray that you will soon be born again as well. Their donations are an expression of their love, and God’s love, for you!

If you would like to help us with the costs associated with the next issue of *The Awakening!*, thank you in advance. Please

send your check to: Heaven’s Family/Awakening, P.O. Box 33, Smicksburg, PA 16256. If you would like to receive any articles that are offered in this issue of *The Awakening!*, or be removed from our mailing list, please write to us at the same address. If you would like to personally speak with Jonas Kurtz, his phone number is (814) 952-7758.

May God bless you as you read this second issue of *The Awakening!* with an open heart and mind. May God be glorified by the work of His grace in you!

Two Kinds of Righteousness

by David Kirkwood

The word *righteousness*, and the related words, *righteous* and *righteously*, as well as the negative versions, *unrighteous* and *unrighteousness*, are found over 180 times in the New Testament. I’m sure you agree that *righteousness* is certainly not an obscure concept in Scripture. So what does it mean to be *righteous* or to possess *righteousness*?

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the primary definition of the English word *righteous* is “acting in accord with divine or moral law.” That definition is certainly affirmed by how the word *righteous* is used in the New Testament. Here are seven quick examples:

1.) Jesus said that at the end of the age, the angels “will come and separate the evil from the *righteous*” (Matt. 13:49). So, righteous people aren’t evil.

2.) Jesus also said that He did not come “to call the *righteous*, but sinners” (Mark 2:17). So, righteous people are not characterized by sin.

3.) Luke wrote that Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth “were both *righteous* in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord” (Luke 1:5). So, righteous people obey God’s commandments.

4.) Paul wrote: “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have *righteousness* and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14). So, righteous people are not characterized by lawlessness, but rather by obedience to law.

5.) Paul also wrote: “Realizing the fact that law is not made for a *righteous* person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1 Tim. 1:9-10). So, righteous people are not lawless, rebellious, ungodly, sinners, unholy,

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profane, murderers, immoral, homosexuals, kidnappers, liars or perjurers. And, incidentally, Paul stated that all those unrighteous behaviors are *contrary to the gospel*. The gospel is not a license for unrighteous behavior.

6.) Peter wrote: “And if He rescued *righteous* Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that *righteous* man, while living among them, felt his *righteous* soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds)” (2 Pet. 2:7). So, righteous people are very troubled by the unprincipled behavior of unrighteous people.

7.) John wrote, “The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous” (1 John 3:7). So, righteous people behave righteously, imitating Christ, who is righteous.

I encourage you to investigate all 180 references in the New Testament to the words *righteous*, *righteousness*, *righteously*, *unrighteous* and *unrighteousness*. Together, they affirm everything that is affirmed in the seven examples I’ve just cited. Indeed, to be righteous is primarily

“to act in accord with divine or moral law.”¹

Two Sources of Righteousness

The New Testament tells us that there are two sources of righteousness: human and divine.

That should not surprise us. Obviously, humans can “act in accord with divine and moral law.” They can obey God’s commandments. They can do righteous deeds. When they tell the truth, for example, that is “an act that is in accord with divine and moral law.” So, again, one source of righteousness is human.

The other is divine. God, of course, can also act in accord with divine and moral law, and He *always* does. In His case, “divine law” is His own law. He is repeatedly spoken of in the Bible as being righteous. For example, Psalm 145:17 declares, “The Lord is righteous in all His ways.” Jesus called His Father, “righteous Father” (John 17:25). Paul mentioned “the righteousness of God” six times in his letter to the Romans (Rom. 1:17; 3:5, 21; 10:3). I have already cited 1 John 3:7, which declared that Jesus is righteous.

Divine righteousness is perfect, whereas human righteousness falls on a spectrum that ranges from awful to impressive (but never perfect). We can read in the Bible of some folks who, on the scale of human righteousness, scored very low or very high.

Scoring on the low side are folks like Ahab, his wife, Jezebel, and Judas, who betrayed Jesus for financial gain. But even two of those villains possessed some small degree of righteousness. Ahab, for example, eventually demonstrated some remorse for his evil. And even Judas returned the money he was paid for betraying Jesus.

Scoring on the high side of the spectrum of righteousness, I have already mentioned Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, of whom Luke wrote, “They were both *righteous* in the sight of God, walking *blamelessly* in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord” (Luke 1:5, emphasis added). But even righteous Zacharias doubted the words of an angel, and he was disciplined for it. God Himself said of Old Testament patriarch, Job, “There is no one like him on the earth,

¹ It is also helpful to know that the Greek words that are often translated in the New Testament as either *justify*, *justifies*, *justified* and *justification*—which are found 34 times—are all derived from the same root words as those translated *righteous*, *righteousness*, *righteously*, *unrighteous* and *unrighteousness*. Notice the similarity between all five Greek New Testament words which, together, are found over 215 times in the New Testament:

Righteous or *righteously*: **dikaïos** (dik'-ah-yos)

Righteousness: **dikaïosune** (dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay) or **dikaïoma** (dik-ah'-yo-mah)

Unrighteous or *unrighteousness*: **adikia** (ad-ee-kee'-ah)

Justify, *justifies*, or *justified*: **dikaïoo** (dik-ah-yo'-o)

Justification: **dikaïosis** (dik-ah'-yo-sis).

Because they all contain the same root, whenever we read any forms of the word *justified* in the New Testament, we could safely paraphrase it as “made righteous.”

a *blameless* and *upright* man, fearing God and turning away from evil” (Job 1:8, emphasis added). Although Job was the most righteous person on the earth at the time, if you’ve read his story, you know he wasn’t perfect. Near the end of his story, God rebuked him.

The apostle Paul, when he was still known as Saul of Tarsus, attained an impressive degree of human righteousness. He wrote of his former self: “[I was] a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the *righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless* (Phil 3:4b-6, emphasis added). Paul testified elsewhere of his former life: “I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions” (Gal. 1:14).

If you had asked any of Saul’s fellow Pharisees during his former life to give you their opinion of him, they would have said something like, “Wow! Saul really stands out among us! No one can find any fault with him!”

But Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, and he soon discovered that he was not nearly as righteous as he’d imagined. Struck down by a blinding light, he learned that, by persecuting Christians, he had been persecuting the Lord Jesus. Saul would eventually look back and see his former self as the “foremost sinner” (1 Tim. 1:15).

A Closer Look at Paul

Paul, in particular, is an interesting person when it comes to understanding the two kinds of righteousness, because he experienced both. Read carefully his words to the Philippian believers, and particularly the words I’ve italicized:

[I was] a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to *the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless*.

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus *my Lord*, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, *not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith* (Phil. 3:5-9).

Did you notice that Paul contrasted two kinds of righteousness? The first kind—which he at one time highly esteemed but ultimately considered “rubbish”—was “a righteousness of [his] own derived from the [Mosaic] Law.” The second kind—which was initially foreign to him but which he ultimately cherished—was a righteousness “which is through

faith in Christ” and “comes from God on the basis of faith.”

Clearly, Paul considered the latter kind of righteousness to be far superior to the former. The former was of no value by comparison to the latter. And why? One reason is because the source of the former righteousness was Paul himself, whereas the source of the latter righteousness *was God*. Obviously, God-granted righteousness would be far superior to human-generated righteousness.

Paul declared that he gained that far-superior, God-given righteousness “through faith in Christ.” I will have more to say on that later, but what was true for Paul is true for anyone and everyone who would like to possess God-granted righteousness. It is received by faith in Christ. There is no other way to receive it. The moment one *truly* believes in Christ, God gives that person divine righteousness. And that is part of the reason Paul elsewhere referred to God-granted righteousness as “the *gift* of righteousness” (Rom. 5:17). It is an unearned, undeserved gift that is received by faith!

The Blessings of God-Given Righteousness

In other places in his letters, Paul revealed more information that helps us understand how God-granted righteousness actually works in the lives of those who have faith in Christ. For example, Paul explained that, when someone

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believes in Christ, all his former sins are forgiven (Col. 1:14). How wonderful is that? But forgiveness is just the first part of the superior gift of righteousness that God gives to those who believe in Christ.

God also transforms believers inwardly and spiritually, giving them a new spiritual nature. They are “born again” (John 3:1-16; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23). It is a dramatic transformation on the inside that soon shows up on the outside. It is so dramatic that the New Testament repeatedly compares it to a death and resurrection. And that is why Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is a new creature*; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Cor. 5:17, emphasis added).

Therefore, the righteousness that God grants is not a brand-new start to an old person, but rather a brand-new start to a brand-new person! I hope you are beginning to understand why, of the two kinds of righteousness, the one that God gives as a gift is far superior to any righteousness that any of us could generate by our own efforts.

Regarding being born again and becoming a new person, here’s a letter from an Amish woman who wrote to me in April after receiving the first issue of *The Awakening*. In her letter, she describes how she was born again:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life’ (John 3:16).

“I was encouraged with the letters about being born again in *The Awakening*, to know I’m not alone. I have a wonderful testimony to share with what God has done for me.

“My journey began with church conflict. The enemy was destroying family relationships because of the shunning some people believe in. I went through an extremely dark journey of depression. Where all seemed helpless to me. I couldn’t sleep for about two months due to fears and anxiety. I felt condemned. I knew I can never be good enough. I’m a sinner and have fallen short.

“Praise God for the ‘true Christians’ or angels in disguise that God brought into my life. I found the light! After removing the unforgiveness from my heart, I asked the Father [and] Lord Jesus Christ to forgive all these people, for they knew not what they were doing.

“After searching and reading my Bible, I’m seeing truth instead of confusion. It happened one evening before falling asleep. I felt peace flood over my soul. The Holy Spirit took over and the enemy had to leave. Praise God! Oh the joy and peace I’ve found is indescribable.

The next morning I woke up... and starting singing ‘Amazing Grace’!

“Thank you for sending us this encouraging letter. Let’s keep the fire burning. To God be the glory, great things He has done!”

Still More...

But I still have not described everything that is included in God’s gift of righteousness that He gives to all who believe in Christ. God also delivers believers from their former slavery to sin and Satan, so they are no longer bound by the shackles that once held them in bondage to do what they hated but could not stop. Jesus said, “Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.... So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:34, 36). That includes freedom from addictions to drugs, alcohol and immorality, as well as the shackles of bitterness and hatred, and even mental illness.

Here’s the testimony of an Amish man who communicated with me who was set free from both sin and mental illness when he was born again:

Two-and a half years ago...I was a miserable wreck, trying to overcome sin by myself. I was on medication for mental illness, which I know now is simply demons coming against us. Many times I cried out to God, ‘Oh God, show me what a true Christian is!’ I told God, ‘It’s like I’m being torn in

two, because my parents said that my brother-in-law and my sister, who had been born again, were deceived, but when I visited my brother-in-law and sister's house, I felt something powerful, something beautiful. 'Oh God, who is right?' I asked. 'Please show me, because I am hurting so much and in so much emotional pain!'

"Oh the healing that my Savior has granted to me in the last 2 and a 1/2 years! Oh the freedom he has given me, freedom from bondage, from sin!! O Lord Jesus!! I love you!! I will praise You through all eternity! You died for me while I was your enemy. I deserved eternal damnation, and yet You gave your life for me, that if I believe in You, that your blood was shed for my sins, and if I repent towards You for my sins, I have eternal life!!

Of course, God's deliverance from the power of sin and Satan does not mean that God no longer allows believers to be tempted to sin. He does, however, limit the degree that believers are tempted. Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth:

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it (1 Cor. 10:13).

Limiting our temptations is just another part of the superior gift of

righteousness that God gives to believers in Christ.

Even More...

But there is still more to God's wonderful gift of righteousness that He gives to those who believe in Christ. Amazingly, *God Himself comes to live inside of them!* Their bodies actually become "temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). Obviously, if you have the HOLY Spirit living in you, He is going to help you be holy and live righteously.

Although there is some mystery to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we know the Bible teaches that they are one. So, if the Holy Spirit comes to live in you, so does the Father and the Son.

Jesus affirmed this fact when He promised, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23). And this is also why Paul could write to the Galatians:

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 (Gal. 2:20, emphasis added).

Obviously, if you died, but your body came back to life with Christ living in it, your capacity to live righteously would increase dramatically! That is a picture

of what happens to people who are genuinely born again. They are "filled with the fruit of righteousness" (Phil. 1:11).

And speaking of the "fruit of righteousness" with which believers are filled, when the Holy Spirit comes to live inside those who believe in Christ, He brings some fruit with Him! Paul enumerated nine of those fruit in Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." When you are truly born again, all that good fruit is inside you wanting to bubble out.

The Grace that Makes Righteousness Possible

All of these wonderful things that none of us deserve are made possible by Jesus, because He died on the cross for our sins. When you begin to understand God's gift of righteousness, you can begin to understand why the New Testament affirms that the basis of salvation is grace, rather than works. Paul wrote to the Roman Christians: "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (Rom. 11:6). "Works" is a reference to trying to be righteous purely through human effort, something Paul did before his Damascus Road experience, whereas "grace" is a reference to the undeserved favor God show believers in granting them the gift of righteousness, which Paul experienced during and after his Damascus Road experience.

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Of course, as free moral agents, we must cooperate with God's work, as He does not and will not force us to obey Him and live righteously. He does not make us into "holy robots." This is why Paul wrote to those in Philippi who had already received God's gift of righteousness:

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

God's grace does not nullify righteousness! Rather, it results in righteousness, which is why Paul also wrote:

For the *grace of God* has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, *instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly* in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us *to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds* (Tit. 2:11-14, emphasis added).

Paul similarly wrote to the believers in Ephesus that God's intention in saving people by His grace is to produce good works through them:

For *by grace you have been saved* through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is *the gift of God*; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them* (Eph. 2:8-10, emphasis added).

A Strange Twisting of God's Righteousness

When God's grace is presented, not as a means to righteousness but as a license to sin, it is being presented in a perverse, unbiblical way. *Heretical* is not too strong of a word for that kind of teaching.

You have, perhaps, heard of a strange twisting of the New Testament's teaching regarding God's gift of righteousness that is being promoted in some "Christian" circles. It advocates the idea that God grants a "legal standing" of righteousness to those who believe in Jesus that may not result in any change of behavior. So, God allegedly declares people righteous who continue to live unrighteously. From then on, when He looks at them, He supposedly only sees "the righteousness of Christ," and never their sin.

Not only does that strange twisting contradict scores of plain biblical passages, it also redefines the very word "righteousness" as it is repeatedly used in the New Testament. Anyone who reads all 180 New Testament references to righteousness could never arrive at the conclusion that someone

could be righteous in God's eyes who doesn't live righteously. Nor could they conclude that God never sees the sins of those who believe in Christ. Anyone who has read Jesus' messages to the seven churches in Asia, found in Revelation 2-3, knows that. Jesus said to five of those churches, "I know your deeds" (Rev. 2:2, 19; 3:1, 8, 15), and He then pointed out things He had against them.

Paul declared, more than once in his letters, that unrighteous people will not inherit God's kingdom, and it is clear that when he used the word "unrighteous," he was not speaking of those who don't possess an alleged "legal standing of righteousness" but those who don't possess actual, practical righteousness. Here is one example:

Or do you not know that *the unrighteous* will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11; see also Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:1-5).

Just imagine Paul, who declared that he was "found blameless" in regard to "the righteousness which is in the Law," then counting his former righteousness as "rubbish"

by comparison to an alleged “legal righteous standing” that might not result in any righteous behavior! The idea is patently absurd.

If you are Amish, perhaps you have observed other Amish people who have left the Amish because they claimed to be born again, but their lifestyle did not reflect righteousness. That is, they did not “act in accord with divine or moral law.” (I am not referring to their not keeping their former community Ordnung, but rather their not keeping Christ’s commandments.)

Their unrighteous behavior is a sure sign that they were not actually born again, but rather that they have embraced the strange twisting of the New Testament’s teaching regarding righteousness that I’ve been talking about. They believe that they are righteous in God’s eyes without actually living righteously. The apostle John addressed that same twisted teaching in his day:

If you know that He [Jesus] is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness *is born of Him* [that is, “born again”].

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives

you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is *born of God* [“born again”] practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God (1 John 2:29 – 3:4-10).

John’s words make it very plain that truly born-again people live righteous lives. And those who are not born again are actually spiritual children of Satan. Whereas people who are born again are spiritual children of God. Good reasons to be born again!

What Kind of Righteousness Do You Possess?

Perhaps you can identify on some level with Paul. Like he was once doing, you are trying your best to live righteously, following God’s commandments—at least to some degree. If you are Amish, you may be also doing your best to follow your community’s Ordnung, which are “fence laws” that are supposed to help you obey God’s commandments and help you stay clear of disobeying them.

If so, I have wonderful news for you. You can receive God’s gift

of righteousness that I’ve been writing about and experience all of the blessings that it promises. The source of your righteousness will not be from your own feeble efforts, but from the righteous God Himself, who will come to live in you by the Holy Spirit, through whom He will produce righteous fruit in you. It is absolutely wonderful! Paul wrote, “Those who receive *the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness* will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17, emphasis added).

How do you receive the gift of righteousness? By believing in Jesus:

If you confess with your mouth *Jesus as Lord*, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in *righteousness*, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation (Rom. 10:9-10, emphasis added).

Who is Jesus? Scripture says that He is many things, including the Son of God and Savior. But more than anything else, He is mentioned in Scripture as Lord. Within the 21 New Testament epistles, Jesus is mentioned as “our Lord” 68 times. So, if you truly believe in Jesus as He is presented in Scripture, you will believe in the “Lord Jesus.” If you believe in the Lord Jesus, you will repent of your rebellion against Him and start to submit to Him, “taking His yoke” (Matt.

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11:28-30) upon yourself, which means making Him your Master from then on.

Many people claim to believe in Jesus but actually don't. I once was one of those people. When I was "confirmed" at age 12 in the church my family attended, I publicly stated that I believed in Jesus and that He was the Son of God. Looking back, however, I realize that I really didn't believe in Jesus. If I would have believed in Him, I would have been hungry to learn all I could about what He did and said so that I could please Him by obeying Him and be ready to stand before Him in judgment. It was not until I was about 17 or 18 years old that I *actually* believed in Jesus. That is when I was born again. That is when Jesus became the center of my life and my Lord, and that is when I started to strive to obey Him.

Perhaps you have made a similar public profession of faith in Jesus at one time, just as I did, in connection with your church. But, if you are honest, you will have to admit that you really didn't repent of your rebellion or make Jesus your Lord at the time, and thus you really didn't believe in Him or experience a transformation. If you have not experienced a transformation, that is a sure sign that you have not been born again.

If you are still breathing, however, there is still hope! You can repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ right now. When a jailer in Philippi asked Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" they replied,

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). Being "saved" is another way of saying, "be forgiven, be born-again, become a spiritual child of God, be set free from sin's bondage, and be indwelt by the Holy Spirit and filled with the fruit of God-granted righteousness!"

Amish Jews

Paul, of course, was a Jew. Although his primary calling was to take the gospel to Gentiles, he naturally was concerned about "his people." He lamented that so many of his fellow Jews were just like he was previously, that is, trying to be righteous through their own efforts to keep the Law of Moses, plus keep all the fence laws that were piled on top of that by the scribes and Pharisees. Concerning his fellow Jews, Paul wrote:

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them [my fellow Jews] is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about *God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own*, they did not subject themselves *to the righteousness of God*. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. 10:1-4, emphasis added).

The way Paul felt about his fellow Jews is very similar to how I feel, and all born-again Amish people feel, about their Amish friends and family members who are

not yet born again. We admire Amish folks for their zeal to live righteously. But we are heartbroken that they have not yet discovered or experienced the wonderful gift of God's righteousness. And that is why many of us have given sacrificially to print and mail this magazine to you, something that costs tens of thousands of dollars. That price, however, is a small one to pay in comparison to what Jesus paid so that we can all experience the gift of God's righteousness. He suffered 39 lashes and a cruel death on a cross, bearing your and my sins, so we could become children of God and act like God's children. Now He is waiting for you to believe in Him. Will you?

Note that Paul wrote in the above-cited passage that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4). The reason that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes is because Christ comes to live in believers to empower them to live righteously. He grants them a righteousness that is potentially far superior to what they could generate on their own.

What Paul wrote is true for every genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. His Holy Spirit who indwells true believers leads and empowers them to live righteous, holy lives. That is why Paul wrote elsewhere, "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law" (Gal. 5:18). Genuine believers in Jesus do not need any list of laws or rules to follow, because they have the righteous law-giver, God Himself, the Holy

Spirit, living in them. That very blessing was a promised benefit of the new covenant:

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days,” says the Lord; “*I will put My laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will write them...and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more*” (Heb. 10:16-17, emphasis added; see also Jer. 31:33-34).

Every time I think about or encounter Amish folks, including my Amish friends, my heart is heavy. Many seem to have attained an admirable degree of human righteousness, but most are lacking God’s gift of righteousness that comes with being born again. Twice a year, at Ordnung church services, all Amish people publicly declare their agreement with their community’s list of rules. And although everyone says that they agree, many do not actually agree, but they say they do in order to “keep the peace.” Many subsequently move from community to community all their lives, all due to Ordnung issues. Everyone is trying to do what is right, but they all know that what is portrayed on the outside is quite different from what is happening on the inside, both individually and corporately.

Here are the words of a former Amish man that I suspect will resonate with many Amish readers:

I was an Amish church member for over 30 years and it is so true that the week of Easter is a very high-pressure week in the Amish communities, because it is the week they have their spring communion. And they have Ordnung Church two weeks prior, and that is when a lot of rules get tightened and restricted, because in order to survive, the Amish have to constantly figure ways out to do things to get around the rules, and the ministers are constantly figuring ways to tighten the loop holes. It’s a constant battle and strain, and a lot of Amish people become public liars that week because they know if they don’t say they agree they will be shunned. OH, HOW I DREADED TO SEE EASTER ROLL AROUND WHILE I WAS AMISH. IT WAS A HORRIBLE TIME OF HORROR (capital letters his).

I don’t know if what he wrote describes every Amish community. Regardless, what he describes is an example people trying to establish their own righteousness through conformity to social pressure, rather than people who have received God’s gift of righteousness, for which no rules are actually needed. Amish bishops and ministers are trying to fence their people into a corral of righteousness, but it is like trying to herd cats! I don’t say that to be critical or make anyone feel badly, but out of love and compassion for sincere people whom I hope to help see that there is something so

much better that God is offering them...His wonderful gift of righteousness. Will you receive it by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Thank you for reading this article. If you would like more information about what the Bible says about being born again, please write and request it. I have written several relevant articles titled, *Born Again and Amish, What Does it Really Mean to be Born Again?* and *Amish or Ahamish?* Any and all are free for the asking.

Who is Winning The Battle for Your Soul?

by Bishop Norman and Mary Yoder

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

First of all, I wish you all the grace of God, the love of Jesus Christ who died on the cross and shed His blood, and paid the penalty of sin, so you and I can go free.

When I was a child, deep inside of me was the lingering question, “Who am I?” I knew I was an Amish boy born in an Amish family. But what was my purpose? Why had God created me? I continued to wonder.

I got married at age 23 in 1986 to a beautiful young lady who was also 23 years old, and who was baptized in our Amish church the same day

Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage!

as I had been. I was ordained a minister on October 14 1994, then on October 4, 1995 I was ordained as a bishop. Life has been a journey for us ever since.

Deep inside I always had a longing to be loved and accepted. I think God puts that inside every little boy and girl whom He creates. And we never lose the inward desire to be loved, valued, and accepted, even as adults.

In life, however, there are two spirits—the Holy Spirit and the evil spirit (the devil). Both spirits want the same place in our lives, so there is always a spiritual battle going on. The evil spirit is always looking for open doors to enter. Remember, he is deceitful and is the author of all lies. He looks for ways to enter early in a child's life. Often times when a child experiences trauma, such as being yelled and screamed at, or harshly criticized in any form, the devil is there to play with our feelings. He tells us that we are worthless and just not good enough. He tells us that we will never amount to anything.

As children we believe those lies. Then we start looking for things we hope will give us some value, but we end up being tricked and trapped. For example, we start noticing people who are successful in life and we start copying them. They become our heroes (rather than Jesus) and we soon fall into the trap of performance, trying desperately to be accepted and loved for who we are.

Then, so often children look up to adults who are not born again and who have not overcome their sinful nature, and they end up being deeply hurt by them. That starts a vicious cycle. The children know about Jesus, but they wonder, "Where is He? If there is a God, why do all these things continue to happen, like when dad gets so angry because we can't get it perfect, or like when preachers preach that our church is the only right church and everyone else is worldly, but at the same time the world is inside the hearts of people who cover it with plain clothing! The Bible says in 1 John 2:16–17 that worldliness is something that stems from the inside: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

We are spirit, soul and body (1 Thes. 5:23). When we are born again, it is our spirit that is made alive. 2 Corinthians 4:16 tell us: "But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed from day by day." The outward man is the body that is slowly dying, but the inward man is the spirit who is being renewed from day to day.

It is our spirit that is born again when we truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we make the decision to follow Jesus come what may, there is a seed deposited in us that starts to sprout. The old nature

is crucified and dies, and out of the seed that was deposited comes a new spirit that connects us with the Holy spirit.

Being born again brings peace to our soul, and our soul is nourished from the Holy Spirit through our spirit that is renewed day by day. If our spirit is not born again, however, then our soul is fed through our selfish nature, and it dies day by day. That is true worldliness, because that is what characterizes the world! The way to overcome the world is to be born again! "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4).

I would be happy to speak to anyone about this who is interested in learning more. We have witnessed so many lives changed in our church and area through the new birth! To the glory of God!

We wish everyone the grace and mercies of God,

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Three Common Questions About Being Born Again

by a Bishop, and a Brother In Christ

1. **D**oes a person have to be born again to get to heaven?

John 3:3-5 says we have to be born of water and the Spirit to enter the Kingdom of God. What does that mean?

First, Jesus is not talking about literal water, but rather of our need to be “cleansed.” When we are born again, the Holy Spirit comes into our life and purifies, or washes our soul. What is our soul being washed from? It is being washed from all sin and unrighteousness. WOW!! That is some good news, isn’t it?

Let’s look at Titus 3:5: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.” So, is that saying that I can’t do any good works that will save me? That is exactly right. We are so apt to think, “If I do enough good works He will save me.” But He saves us only according to “His mercy.”

What is “His mercy?” It is Him not giving us what we deserve. We deserve death or eternal separation from God, but because of “His mercy” He saves us from hell (through the washing of regeneration... Titus 3:5).

Let’s look now at Ezekiel 36:25-27 to see what God said through him about being born again: “Then will

I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.” Notice again, God is the one doing all the work in us. All we are doing is responding to His Spirit that He puts into us.

Now that we know we have to be born again and that being born again is by God’s mercy and not by our good works, it leads us to pose the next question.

2. What do I need to do to be born again?

To be born again, we have to come to a point in our life when we are, as Jesus said in Matthew 5:3, “poor in spirit.” Being “poor in spirit” is the opposite of being self-sufficient. It speaks of the deep humility of recognizing one’s utter spiritual bankruptcy apart from God. It describes those who are acutely conscious of their own lostness and hopelessness apart from God’s great forgiveness.

What else is needed to be born again? Let’s look at Romans 10:9: “That if

thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” That is not talking about a simple acknowledgment that Jesus is God and Lord of the universe. Rather, it is the deep personal conviction that Jesus is our personal Master. This includes three choices we have to make. (1) We have to repent, which means we must turn from our life of sin and turn to God. (2) We need to trust in Jesus for salvation. This means we recognize we can’t do anything to earn salvation, but put all our trust in Jesus. (3) We have to submit to Jesus as Lord. This means we have to give up our own will and agree to do whatever Jesus’ will is. If you are not yet born again, you can be right now!

3. How do I know if I am born again?

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.” Once we are born again, we experience new desires, we have a desire to please God, and we look at life from a different perspective. So we should all ask ourselves, “As I look back over my life, is there a point when I experienced a dramatic change on the inside? Have I become a “new creation?”

That inward change will affect outside changes also. The apostle John wrote in his first letter: “These things I have I written unto you [in this letter] that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know

that ye have eternal life.” So, we can know if we have eternal life! In his letter, John repeatedly listed three tests whereby we can know if we have been born again. He said that those who are born again: “Confess that Jesus is the Son of God” (1 John 4:15), obey His commandments (1 John 2:3), and love other people who are born again (1 John 3:14). So, we can and should look at our lives for those evidences of being genuinely born again.

What is Freedom in Christ?

by Bishop Lyle Bontrager

Greetings in Jesus' Name!

Praise God for what Jesus did for us on the cross! And praise God that Jesus arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sent His Holy Spirit as a wonderful gift to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!

When Jesus died on the cross, He fulfilled the Law's requirement for us, because as sinners, we deserved to die. And by His resurrection from the dead, He made it possible for all who believe in Him to be born again and be set us free from sin's bondage. That is why we read in Galatians 5:1: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty where with Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

We also read in Colossians 2:14 that Jesus “blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,

which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” So, we can be forgiven of all our sins through Jesus' death! That doesn't mean, of course, that believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have a license to sin. Praise God that by the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in those who believe, we can obey Jesus' commandments.

When we are born again by the Holy Spirit, we recognize Jesus Christ as both our Lord and Savior. He saves us, not just from the penalty of our sins, but also from the power of sin. And if we have the Holy Spirit living in us to help us live holy lives, we don't need an ordnung. You have probably already discovered that the ordnung has no power to keep anyone from sinning! We all need something much more powerful. Those who are born again have the Holy Spirit!

When we Amish people think that keeping the ordnung is the way to get to heaven, we insult God, who sent His Son as the means to get people to heaven. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). The only way to the Father in heaven is through His Son Jesus.

Even God's commandments that are found in the Bible cannot save us, because none of us have kept them. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” If salvation was earned by our works, none of us can be saved. Thank God He sent His Son to die for all our sins and made a way that we can be forgiven and be born again, filled and empowered by His Spirit!

Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20-21: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

Praise God that everyone who has been born again can identify with what Paul wrote! We have died with Christ, and He has been resurrected in us, all through faith in Him who loves us. He did for us what neither God's law nor man's ordnung could do! He made a way for us to become righteous, which means “made right in the eyes of God,” through the forgiveness of our sins and the power to overcome sin.

So now let us live our lives with fear of God instead of fear of man! When we fear God, that does not mean to be scared of him, but to have a thirst to learn more of him in the Scriptures. And also allowing Him to guide us by His Holy Spirit.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He said in John 14: 25-26: “These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

So, thank God that we can be guided by the Holy Spirit down here on earth. He will convict us when we fall short, so that we can confess our sin

and receive forgiveness. When we have conviction from the Holy Spirit, we no longer need conviction from man. Grace be with you all!

Walking in the Light

by Bishop Sam Chupp

I recently asked myself, “If I knew that my next sermon would be my last sermon on earth, what would I preach about?” I think the one verse I would want to share with my church is 1 John 1:7:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

If we desire to be cleansed from all sin—which the only way we could hope to be with Christ throughout eternity—we must “walk in the light as he is in the light.” What does that mean?

If we read all of John’s first letter, we notice how he often contrasts being “in the light” with being “in the darkness.” Clearly, darkness represents ignorance and sin, whereas light represents truth and obedience. Jesus was, and he is, “in the light” of truth and obedience. So, to “walk in the light as he is in the light” means to live our lives imitating Jesus, walking in the truth and obedience.

To “walk in the light as he is in the light” implies a personal, close relationship with Jesus. Paul taught

that, those who truly believe in Jesus become “one spirit” with him (1 Cor. 6:17).

Jesus once described the relationship that He has with those who truly believe in Him using an analogy of a shepherd and his sheep. When the shepherd calls His sheep to follow him, they recognize his voice and heed his call. They follow him. Sheep won’t follow a stranger who calls them (John 10:3-5).

This is how we can tell if we *truly* belong to Jesus and if He is *truly* our shepherd. Are we following him? Or are we following someone else? When we “walk in the light as he is in the light,” we will always be striving to obey him.

John wrote that two things will certainly happen when we “walk in the light as he is in the light.”

First, we will “have fellowship one with another.” To “have fellowship with” speaks of more than just having conversation with others. It speaks of sharing with and caring for others. It speaks of living harmoniously in service towards one another.

God’s true sheep have a special love for one another. When we “walk in the light,” our relationships with each other blossom beautifully.

Secondly, as we “walk in the light as he is in the light,” the most beautiful thing that could ever happen to anyone takes place. We are “cleansed from all sin” by the blood of Jesus Christ! As soon as we repent of “walking in the darkness” and begin “walking in the light,”

we are cleansed from all our former sins. From then on, our lives are characterized, not by sin, but by holiness. Although John didn’t mention it in 1 John 1:7, elsewhere Scripture reveals that, when we truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live in us to produce fruit for God’s glory.

Can you relate to 1 John 1:7? Have you turned away from “walking in darkness” and begun “walking in the light”? Have you repented and genuinely believed in the Lord Jesus? If you haven’t yet, you can right now. As soon as you do, your life will change. You will find yourself a new member of God’s family, a person who loves and is loved by all the other members of that family. You will be cleansed from your sins, forgiven of every wrong thing you have ever done, and empowered to live an obedient life with the help of the Holy Spirit. You will be born again!

Don’t wait! Once your life has been transformed, God will use you to help others experience the same blessing!

If you would like to contact me, feel free to call me or write me a letter.

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