

From this point the author of the tract begins to “water down” this very emphatic statement by saying that this doesn’t really mean what it says. In his explanation of the verse he offers this qualifying statement:
“A man born again, or regenerate, does not commit sin as a habit.”(my emphasis)

Why does he add these last three words? Why can’t he simply allow the verse to say what it says? Because he doesn’t know anyone—including himself—who “doth not commit sin!” Therefore, this addition must be made in order to make the verse work for him.

His second “mark” is based on 1 John 5:1: “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God;

In other words, if one is born again, he will proclaim that Jesus is the Christ.

His third mark is based on 1 John 2:29:

3

Let’s cut right to the heart of the problem here. The problem with this entire application of scripture is that there is nobody in the world today who could ever be obedient to this doctrine, because no believer, NOW, is “born again” or “born of God.”

No way! Just about every preacher in the history of Protestant Evangelicalism, from Luther to Calvin to Wesley to Finney to Spurgeon to Moody to Billy Graham, says we’re born again. How can these “pillars of the faith” be wrong about this? As brilliant as some of these men (and others like them) may have been, they have missed something in the new testament section of scripture that gives the lie to their contention that being born again and being saved are one and the same. That something is called “the revelation of the mystery”, and it is laid out exclusively in the thirteen epistles of the Apostle Paul. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery,

3

“Every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him.”

Here is his explanation of what he believes this entails:

“The man born again, or regenerate, then, is a holy man. He endeavors to live according to God’s will, to do the things that please God, to avoid the things that God hates. His aim and desire is to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love his neighbor as himself. His wish is to be continually looking to Christ as his example as well as his Savior, and to show himself Christ’s friend by doing whatsoever Christ commands. No doubt he is not perfect. None will tell you that sooner than himself. He groans under the burden of indwelling corruption cleaving to him. He finds an evil principle within him constantly warring against Grace, and trying to draw him away from God. But he does not consent to it, though he cannot prevent its presence. In spite of all shortcomings, the average bent and bias of his way is holy—his doings are holy, his tastes holy, and his habits holy.

4

which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; Rom 16:25-26; Col. 1:26; Eph. 3:3-5

I can find no reference within Paul’s thirteen epistles to anything remotely resembling what John refers to as being born again or born of God (from above), not in the sense that John uses the designation. Certainly, few Evangelicals, outside of Charismatics who make a claim to a “second work of grace,”

4

In spite of all his swerving and turning aside, like a ship beating up against a contrary wind, the general course of his life is in one direction – toward God and for God.

And though he may sometimes feel so low that he questions whether he is a Christian at all, he will generally be able to say with old John Newton, ‘I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be. I am not what I hope to be in another world, but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the Grace of God I am what I am.’”

I agree that what he describes in this exegesis could very well characterize many Christian’s life experience, but none of this can be substantiated from the area of scripture, John’s gospel and his first epistle, from which he is deriving his conclusions. It says in 2 Corinthians 5 that believers are “made the righteousness of God in him”2(Christ), which Paul refers to in Romans 4 as “imputed righteousness”

5

that supposedly believe they are born again, would have the Gaul to claim they never sinned. Usually, their standard MO is to spiritualize the passages by claiming it’s their “spirit man” or “new nature” that doesn’t sin, as if there is something in them totally apart from who they actually are. Of course, this is a complete misuse of these scriptures in 1 John, which are about identification and nothing else. Members of the body of Christ are identified by their testimony of salvation, not by their ability to “overcome” their sinful nature. The miracle and power of God in the present dispensation is being displayed in the fact that he is using flawed, weak (translation: “sinful”) human beings to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Christ. We, like our apostle, Paul, are “carnal, sold under sin.”(Rom. 7:14) But like Paul, we can say, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ who 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.

5

This simply means that Christ’s righteousness has been imputed to the believers heavenly account. In no way does it mean that the believer, upon trusting in Christ for his/her salvation, is made right or holy in the flesh.

The fourth mark is from 1 John 3:14:

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

The born again man will automatically love all fellow Christians. I suppose this depends on one’s definition of the word “love.“ I’ve been saved for twenty five years, and been in fellowship with a broad spectrum of Christians, but I have yet to experience this kind of “automaton” love amongst the brethren. Many brethren, myself included, can be quiet “unloving” at times, thus requiring great will and effort to evoke any “love” for them.

6

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” Gal 2:20-21
When Christians go around claiming they are born again– which in effect is saying that they possess a new, sinless nature—they are indeed frustrating the grace of God, not to mention placing themselves under a burden they cannot possibly bear. No doubt, a day is coming when all those of us who have trusted Christ as our Savior will be born again and no longer have the presence of sin in our lives. That day is “the day of redemption,” that day when “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel”4 and take us out of here. In that day our “vile bodies” will be changed into “a body likened unto Christ’s glorious body.”
Until then, what we are is “saved...and sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.unto the day of redemption.”

Mike Schroeder

6