



DECEMBER 2002

*If anyone is in Christ, he is a NEW creation;
old things have passed away; behold, ALL things have become NEW (2 Corinthians 5:17).*

Happy NEW Year! Joy and I spent Christmas week away from home...the first time in almost a year that Joy was able to be away like that. Joy's back incision is nearly healed, and her IV antibiotics have been extended through January. She still experiences some pain, but we believe it is because she is so weak from a long recuperation from her surgeries. It will take a long time to RE-NEW her physical strength.

This newsletter focuses on that word "NEW." It's amazing how I have come to see the truths that I try to express in each newsletter are not something different each month...each newsletter is simply a NEW perspective of the ONE eternal foundational truth that CHRIST IS LIFE. Christ came to give us NEW life, not to improve our old life. Consider three glorious NEW truths that transform lives.

1. **NEW COMMANDMENT – promised by Jesus before the cross.** Jesus said in John 13:34, "*A NEW COMMANDMENT I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you.*" However, Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-38, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.*" This verse from Matthew is a quote of Deuteronomy 6:5, written many years earlier. So why does Jesus later refer to a NEW COMMANDMENT? Let's look at the context of each verse.

In the Matthew verse, Jesus is responding to the Pharisees who in their pride had challenged Jesus' authority. Pharisees were religious men who thought they could keep God's commandments. However, commandments were not given by God to drive us to live for Him, but they were given by a loving God to drive us to Christ Himself who promises to live through us (Galatians 3:24-25)!

In the John verse, Jesus is speaking to his disciples who had just been humbled by Jesus washing their feet. Jesus introduces the phrase *AS I HAVE LOVED YOU* in this new commandment. Do you suppose Jesus is asking us to imitate His example of love? Could we ever truly imitate this love that only originates in God? No...not in and of ourselves. A few verses later in John 15, Jesus explains that He is the life of the vine, like sap in a tree, and the disciples only need to abide (rest, trust) in Him, like a branch in a tree. A branch doesn't strain to hang on to the tree! Christ's life (sap) flows through us (branches) to produce the fruit of God's love (Galatians 5:22). A miracle.

2. **NEW COVENANT – fulfilled by Jesus on the cross.** Hebrews 9:15 says, "*For this reason (the shedding of His blood) Christ is the Mediator of the NEW COVENANT for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*" Under the old covenant of LAW, God had a part and man had a part to fulfill. If we obeyed, God blessed us, but if we didn't obey, God cursed us (Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15). Under the new covenant of GRACE, God does it all...all we have to do is to receive (believe) all that Christ has done unconditionally for us! We already and forever have ALL blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3)! God is faithful to fulfill this new covenant that He promised in Seed form to Abraham long before the old covenant (Galatians 3:16).

3. **NEW CREATION – provided by Jesus through the cross.** Galatians 6:14-15 sums it all up so well, "*God forbid that I should boast except in cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision (doing something for God) nor uncircumcision (not doing something for God) avails anything, but a NEW CREATION.*" Paul boldly proclaimed that everything on earth has no real value except the outworking of Christ's life through a person re-created through the cross. All that we will ever need has been promised, fulfilled, and provided by Jesus!

ETERNAL LIFE

by Jennifer Kennedy Dean (www.prayinglife.org)

Eternal life is a completely new Life – the life of Jesus (Romans 6:23, 1 John 5:11). It is not an addendum tacked on to my earth-life. Eternal life is not something God gives me apart from Himself. **He is Eternal Life and He is in me.** When He transfused me with His Life, at that very moment I received Eternal Life. I'm living it right now. Someday I will live my Eternal Life without the limits of an earth-body, but the Life will be the same. The word "eternal" means that it has no ending, but also that it has no beginning. Eternal is always "now." Eternal Life is always NEW. "*Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day*" (2 Corinthians 4:16).

GRACELIFE CONFERENCE

Christ Life Ministries will be teaching a GraceLife Conference at Emma Gray Memorial United Methodist Church in Woodruff, SC January 17-18, 2003. Everyone is welcome! Two members of that church have been training through Christ Life Ministries; I am excited that Joey and Debra will be participating in the teaching of the Conference. My heart in ministry is to encourage others to minister the life Christ in their own unique ways. Other GraceLife Conferences are scheduled in Hendersonville and in Simpsonville in 2003 (see enclosed flyer).

GRACE NOTE

The photograph on the back is to show that true life never grows old!



Over a year ago, I had the opportunity to share the truths of the gospel with Marilyn, who is 81 years young. Jesus revealed His joy to and in each of us as we shared. Joy and I had a special blessing to see Marilyn during the Christmas holidays.

Joy and Marilyn are testimonies of God's grace to me.