

## THE FALL AND RESTORATION OF MAN – Part 3

By David Ralph Werrell

Jesus answered Nicodemus, “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3). This new birth is necessary because when Adam sinned, according to God, he died (Gen. 2:17); therefore he needed to be born again if he were to have fellowship with God. Or as St. Paul expresses it, “*But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ... For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:4-10). And so we find in God’s Word, how God, through re-creation enabled fallen man to be restored to life through God’s grace and mercy to us; through the Holy Spirit sprinkling those dead in trespasses and sins with the blood of Christ.

At this point we must return to Tyndale’s theology.<sup>1</sup> Whilst Calvinism and most Christian theologies believe the Covenant of Salvation is between God and man: Tyndale’s theology is of a Trinitarian Covenant for the restoration of creation to its pristine state when God created it and before man’s sin destroyed creation’s purity. God, the Trinity, demanded that justice had to be done if there were to be any hope of creation’s purity being restored. The Covenant expressed how God’s justice could be satisfied and creation restored. God, the Father, covenanted with God, the Son and God, the Holy Spirit, to elect those who were to be brought from death to life. God, the Son, covenanted with God, the Father, and God, the Holy Spirit, to become man and to shed his blood a sacrifice for sin. God the Holy Spirit covenanted with God the Father and God the Son, to sprinkle the blood of Christ on those dead in trespasses and sins so that they might be born again, be a new creation and restored to life. This undid all the harm man’s sin had done to God’s creation – this is the new creation, the new birth, God promised to men.<sup>2</sup> Having brought life to those who were dead, through the sprinkling of the blood of Christ the Holy Spirit was able to achieve the restoration of man, and for God’s covenant of salvation to become a reality – the sprinkling of Christ’s blood enabled man to be born anew, to be a new creation, enabling the living man to repent, to have faith, to hear and respond to the Gospel, to pray, to worship God, to serve God and do good works, to witness to God’s love and mercy and salvation. As we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

*“For by one offering he [Christ] hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where the remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin....let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ... For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? ... ”* (Hebrews 10:(7-13) 14-31.)

Are we, as God’s people, going to keep God’s laws and commandments; or are we going to amend them because fallen man has found in fallen creation things that appear to point to changes that

supersede God's laws? What happened in the Fall? was God right when he said, In the day you eat of it, you shall surely die. Or the Devil, who said, You shall not die.

Briefly I will deal with some areas where Tyndale's theology disagreed with much modern theology. Firstly, I will consider the two sacraments – Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Many churches – including those whose teaching is paedobaptist are practising re-baptism under the belief that in baptism we are witnessing to our faith in Christ. However, the Bible links baptism with circumcision that had to be performed by the eighth day:

*“...And ye are complete in him [Christ], which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein ye also are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” (Col. 2:9-13.)*

This, and other passages clearly link circumcision with baptism: but also they link both circumcision and baptism to God's witness to us. A constant theme throughout the Bible is God saying, *“I will be your God, and you shall be my people.”* [Of course, if baptism is a witness of my faith it means that I will never sin again! This is the teaching of Hebrews 6. Believer's baptism leaves *“the principles of the doctrine of Christ”* and introduces man's *“doctrine of baptism”*, that ties them to absolute perfection, and for them *“it is impossible ...if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”* (Hebrews 6:1-6.)] For Tyndale the sacraments were signs given by God to confirm God's covenant of salvation for man – and the movement of both circumcision/baptism and the Passover/Lord's Supper is from God to man.

It is commonly thought that the Eucharist is a service of thanksgiving to God for Christ dying for us on the Cross, and that the Service is a witness to Christ's passion on Good Friday. Tyndale points out that the Passover lamb was slain before the Israelites were freed from Egypt – otherwise the blood could not have been put on the doorposts and lintels of their houses so that the angel of death would pass over their houses. The Lord's Supper was instituted on the night before Jesus was crucified, and Tyndale's comment was that the first Passover meal was *“a seal of the promise to be delivered the same night,”* likewise, at the Last Supper, Christ pointed the disciples forward to their coming deliverance from slavery to Satan, *“My passion that is now at hand, and blood that now shall shortly be shed; by the which ye shall be delivered out of the power of Satan, sin and hell.”*<sup>4</sup> To understand Tyndale's doctrine of the Lord's Supper we have to turn the clock back from the events of Good Friday to the night before the crucifixion. That Thursday evening Christ was sharing the Paschal meal with his disciples; Christ said the words of institution of the Lord's Supper, and these must have some relevance to the Passover meal, *“neither the sacrifices of the old law which prophesied the sacrificing of Christ, neither yet our redemption, was fulfilled that night. For if the scriptures and prophecies were then fulfilled, and we then redeemed, Christ died on the morrow in vain.”*<sup>5</sup> Therefore Tyndale asked Sir Thomas More, *“If it were then the very sacrificing of Christ's body, ... why was he sacrificed so cruelly on the morrow?”*<sup>6</sup>

In both baptism and the Lord's Supper Tyndale finds the movement is from God to man, and that in both sacraments the meaning is to be found before the normal interpretation the Church places on these sacraments – the sacraments point forward to an event yet to take place, and yet an event, that for us, took place in the past but will not be fulfilled until Christ returns in glory and our redemption is fulfilled.

In almost every book in the Bible, in one form or another, is God's statement, *“I will be your God,*

*and you shall be my people.*” The whole of our Christian life must be a life of dedication, of commitment and of obedience to God, in this we show that we are God’s people. It is then that we realise that God is indeed our God. Throughout the scriptures the initiative for our salvation is from God. The Israelites were God’s chosen people, and for the Christian our salvation has nothing to do with our hearing and responding to the Gospel message. *“For contrary to that, readest thou John xv. ‘Ye have not chosen me,’ saith Christ, ‘but I have chosen you, that ye go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit remain.’”*<sup>7</sup>

As we read in *Answer*,

*Even so goeth it with God’s elect. God chooseth them first, and they not God; as thou readest, John xv. And then he sendeth forth and calleth them, and sheweth them his good will, which he beareth unto them, and maketh them see both their own damnation in the law, and also the mercy that is laid up for them in Christ’s blood, and thereto what he will have them do. And then, when we see his mercy, we love him again, and choose him, and submit ourselves unto his laws, to walk in them.*<sup>8</sup>

For Tyndale, the initiative for our salvation has to come from God, for whilst we are “dead in trespasses and sins” we are unable to hear the gospel being preached. As Jesus said unto Nicodemus, *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* (John 3:3.) Tyndale returns to Christ’s encounter with Nicodemus in his Prologue to Romans.

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Endnotes:

- 1) See my book, *The Theology of William Tyndale*, ISBN 0 227 67985 7.
- 2) John 3:3, 2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15, 1 Pet 1:23
- 3) Tyndale, PS-1, Sacraments, p. 354
- 4) Tyndale, PS-1, Sacraments, p. 355
- 5) Tyndale, PS-1, Sacraments, p. 271
- 6) Tyndale, PS-3, Answer, p. 178
- 7) Tyndale, PS-1, Mammon, p. 112
- 8) Tyndale, PS-3, Answer, p. 35