

John 8:31-38

Then Jesus turned to the Jews who had claimed to believe in him. "If you stick with this, living out what I tell you, you are my disciples for sure. Then you will experience for yourselves the truth, and the truth will free you." Surprised, they said, "But we're descendants of Abraham. We've never been slaves to anyone. How can you say, 'The truth will free you'?"

Jesus said, "I tell you most solemnly that anyone who chooses a life of sin is trapped in a dead-end life and is, in fact, a slave. A slave is a transient, who can't come and go at will. The Son, though, has an established position, the run of the house. So if the Son sets you free, you are free through and through.

I know you are Abraham's descendants. But I also know that you are trying to kill me because my message hasn't yet penetrated your thick skulls. I'm talking about things I have seen while keeping company with the Creator, and you just go on doing what you have heard from your Father - The enemy of you souls." - The Message.

CALLED TO WHOLENESS

The challenge in embracing our new life in Christ is to realize that in order to navigate life's ocean we need not just to cobble together some sort of lame raft of our own devising, or even buy a sleek ship – we need to allow God to transform us into creatures with gills, that we may own and inhabit that ocean, not merely see it as an obstacle. Moreover, after this leap of faith we then have an even greater one – we have to take our first gulp of water and trust God that we will not drown.

God's call to us is one of endless potential, up to and including full embrace in the substance of God – 'a place at the right hand of God' to use ancient language.

All is together, our virtues and vices, they all go into the pot for transformation, for it may just be that those 'so called' vices turn into our greatest assets when transfigured in this new life. We are not a list of 'jobs to do' we are whole beings and we gradually grow to act as whole beings.

This new life in Christ, this 'born from above' business is something profoundly different from just another albeit wonderful possession. It is a reality shift, a change of light, landscape, landmarks – everything we use to orient ourselves. From being 'getting machines' – creatures who just like possums or dogs or bats are all about 'getting' we become whole human beings, defined by something other than simply our needs. We go from the infant who's only response is to bawl 'Gimme gimme gimme!' to complex, nuanced, individuals, who are spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual. We are free from the slavery of desire – and I don't mean just sex, I mean that our needs no longer define us, and no longer have power over us in the same way.

This new life could be defined by three signs of operation – three outward clues that the inward changes are deepening and that God is now the axis and wellspring of our lives.

This process has within itself a Threefold challenge.

TRUST – humility, surrender

Rowan Williams – The Wound of Knowledge

Self dependence in the face of an all knowing creator God is revealed as a delusion – a route to self destruction. It is the ultimate work of deception, that we can ever be 'self reliant' in such a universe.

LIGHT – transcendence, of people of place

Thomas Traherne

'In the middle of the seventeenth century, there walked the muddy lanes of Herefordshire and the cobbled streets of London, a man who had found the secret of happiness. He lived through a period of bitterest, most brutal warfare and a period of corrupt and disillusioned peace. He saw the war and the peace at close quarters. He suffered as only the sensitive can. He did not win his felicity easily. Like the merchantman seeking goodly pearls or the seeker for treasure hidden in a field, he paid the full price.

But he achieved his pearl, his treasure. He became one of the most radiantly, most infectiously happy mortals this earth has known.'

'Your enjoyment of the World is never right till every morning you awake in Heaven; see yourself in your Father's Palace, and look upon the earth and air as celestial joys, having such reverend esteem of all, as if you were among the Angels. The bride of a monarch, in her husband's chamber, hath no such causes of delight as you.'

LOVE – growth, compassion, becoming Christ-like

Julian of Norwich

'Thus our mother, Christ, in whom our parts are kept unseparated, works in us in various ways. For in our mother, Christ, we profit and increase, and in mercy he reforms and restores us, and by virtue of his passion, death, and resurrection joins us to our substance. This is how our mother, Christ, works in mercy in all his beloved children who are submissive and obedient to him... **Our substance is whole in each person of the Trinity, which is one God'**

WE AS NEW BORN LIVE IN A NEW LANDSCAPE – we have no new possession and nothing to boast of, we do however walk amongst the first fleeting glimpses of paradise. Our destination is never fully realized here, but it is now glimpsed and followed and craved and sought after.

Rowan Williams - The Wound of Knowledge

The new life is not a possession, it is, quite simply, new life. PAGE 19 middle paragraph.