

being *born again*.

The new birth changes us from the inside-out. It changes our hearts from being indifferent toward God into desiring a close relationship with Him. It begins the process of repairing our *want to*. "So that if any one is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old state of things has passed away; a new state of things has come into existence" (2nd Corinthians 5:17, Weymouth).

This new life is a permanent condition. One may sometimes stumble and grieve God, but he cannot escape what he has now become. Jesus said, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall *never* perish" (John 10:28).

Perhaps you yourself have sensed God calling you in your heart. You may have also sensed Him convicting you of sin. How exactly should you respond to God in order to accept His offer? Repent and trust Jesus in faith!

Face up to the fact that you can't stand on your record. Compared to God's perfect righteous standard, your own righteousness amounts to a zero. If we got what we deserved, we would all go to hell. You must recognize that your sinful condition is very serious.

Own up to what you have done. Admit to God you have sinned. The Bible promises, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (First John 1:9).

Look to Christ—and Christ alone—to rescue you from sin. Faith and repentance are directed *toward Jesus Christ*. The Bible says, "You are all sons of God through faith *in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:26). The Bible says that, "As many as received *Him*, to them He gave the right to become children of God..." (John 1:12).

Receiving the gift of eternal life means that you will stand up and be identified with Christ. There are no secret Christians. You can't play on a team without wearing their

uniform! The Bible says, "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved" (Romans 10:9-10, Revised Standard Version).

On signing day, a player and his parents sit at a table with the coach who recruited him. The media may be present. Family and friends are there. The player's high school coach is there. It is a time of excitement as the player signs on the dotted line and formally accepts the scholarship offer. In the same way, the Bible teaches, there is great excitement in Heaven when a single individual comes home to Jesus Christ.

No gift is yours until you accept it, not even God's offer of eternal life. Why don't you accept God's offer today? We do not deserve it. We cannot achieve it. We can only receive it. Place your trust in Jesus Christ. Trust Him alone to forgive you, to get you into Heaven, and to make you right with God. Why not pray right now and surrender your life to Him?

It's Recruiting Season

Have You Been Feeling Lately That
God is Recruiting You?

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It's recruiting season in college football. Coaches are calling and visiting players in hopes of landing the most skilled athletes. Fans are reading recruiting web sites daily to keep up with the most sought-after recruits, hoping the players choose the schools whom they support. Both coaches and fans want to land the biggest and fastest players. And it is an exciting time for the players to have major universities asking them to come play for them!

During recruiting season, prospects are sent mail-outs and recruiting packets. Not only the players, but also their parents are given information about the university and student life. Coaches visit players in their homes and meet their families. Players may take an official visit to tour the facilities and see a game. During these visits they are shown around the campus by pretty girls, are taken to the locker room to see their own names on back of jerseys hanging in one of the lockers. Then they often see their names again, this time on the big screen in the stadium and watch a highlight film that would fire them up about playing for that team. They are hosted by one of the current players and are fed well. In every way possible, the player is shown that he is wanted. The message is clear: we want to provide you with a free college education if you will play for our team.

God recruits, too! God also offers something freely. God provides eternal life and offers it free. The Bible refers to salvation as "the free gift" (Romans 5:15), and tells us "The *gift of God* is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

How God Recruits: The Bible says God "calls us" to Himself. "He called you through our gospel" (2nd Thessalonians 2:14). We sense ourselves being attracted to Him. There is an inward pull toward Him.

Another way God recruits us is in what the Bible calls **conviction of sin**. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would "convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment" (John 16:8).

Conviction is a good kind of guilt which makes us face our sin and feel our need. It drives us to God. It can be powerful and painful, but it also offers hope.

We are born able to know right from wrong, but not always. We have a conscience, but all it produces are feelings of guilt. We are unable to discipline ourselves to do many of the things we know to be right. Our "want to" is broken—we have trouble even wanting to be what we know we ought to be. We are born into the world estranged from God.

God is a God of love; He is also a God of justice. He cannot simply overlook our sins and pretend they didn't happen. He must punish sin. You say a God of love wouldn't do that? Then what about things like unsolved murders? What about horrible crimes that were never brought to justice on earth? Are we prepared to accept *injustice* as a *permanent* state? Do we really want God *not* to be a God of justice? No, God is absolutely just and will punish every sin. The Lord "will not at all acquit the wicked" (Nahum 1:3).

God's holiness and our sinfulness present a dilemma: God's perfect standard requires that we make a 100 on God's test; a 99 will not do. The perfection of God requires perfection from us. James 2:10 tells us, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it" (Revised Standard Version). Some of us have done worse than others, but "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Therefore, we cannot know God or enter heaven through our own goodness.

God loves people and desires for us to have a relationship with Him. When their time on earth is completed, He wants people to be with Him in Heaven. So, though we were helpless, God solved the problem of sin and justice for us. How?

God Himself came to our rescue. Jesus Christ, God the Son, came to earth personally and was born a real human being. Jesus was

tempted, but did not sin. He taught us, though He did not come primarily to teach. He healed, but He did not come primarily to heal. These things served to reveal His identity. Jesus came to die on the cross as our substitute.

In Jesus, God Himself paid the penalty that we could not pay. Like a judge finding his own daughter guilty, and then paying her traffic ticket himself, Jesus personally accepted our punishment and "bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (First Peter 2:24). This means that a total and complete forgiveness is available and that a relationship with God is possible.

On the first Wednesday in February, college football has *national signing day* when players formally and officially accept a specific school's scholarship offer. We accept God's offer of eternal life in two ways, *repentance and faith*.

Repentance—Repentance is an attitude adjustment which changes the direction of our lives. It is turning to God from self—that is, from our self-centeredness and sin. "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out and that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Faith—Faith is trusting Jesus Christ to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. You cannot get your own sins forgiven, you cannot get yourself to heaven, you cannot make yourself right with God. But because of the cross, Jesus can. Faith is trusting Him to do it for us. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Faith is more than just believing things about God; it is trusting Christ. We must trust Jesus apart from anything we ourselves might do.

We are talking about more than a new lifestyle or merely signing on to a new list of beliefs. It is not about self-improvement (in fact, self is the problem). It is about God giving new life to us spiritually. The Bible calls this