

The Way of Love

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CHAPTER SIX

The New Creature

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Paul wrote words that have given hope to millions: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."* He does not say "improved creature" or "repaired creature." He says new. Something fundamentally different. A new beginning.

This is what Jesus explained to Nicodemus that night: *"Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Nicodemus, a respected teacher of Israel, did not understand. How can a man be born when he is old? But Jesus was speaking of another kind of birth — a spiritual birth, a transformation so radical it can only be described as starting over.

This is not moral reform. It is not simply deciding to behave better, to try harder, to follow more rules. It is being recreated from within. It is receiving a new nature, new desires, new eyes to see, a new heart to love. It is what God promised through Ezekiel: *"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."*

The old heart was curved toward itself. The new heart can love. The old heart was hardened. The new heart is sensitive to God's voice. The old heart sought its own glory. The new heart finds joy in glorifying the Father. Not because it tries harder, but because it is different.

Paul experienced this firsthand. He, who had persecuted the church with fury, who had approved of Stephen's death, who breathed threats against the disciples — that same man became the apostle of love and grace. It was not a gradual change of opinion. It was an encounter with the risen Christ that completely transformed him. The persecutor became a preacher. The enemy became an ambassador.

This transformation does not happen all at once. There is a moment of new birth, yes, but then comes a whole lifetime of growth. Paul speaks of being *"transformed from one degree of glory to another"* into the image of Christ. It is a process. There are advances and setbacks. There are days of victory and days of struggle. But the direction is set, and he who began the good work will bring it to completion.

Peter, who denied Jesus three times, became the rock on which the church was built. His letters breathe love, humility, and an unshakable confidence in the Lord who restored him. The new creature in him did not erase his personality — he was still Peter, impetuous and passionate — but redirected it, purified it, put it in service of the Kingdom.

This is what God does in us. He does not turn us into identical copies without personality. He transforms us into redeemed versions of ourselves — who we were truly designed to be before sin distorted everything. As C.S. Lewis says, God does not want us to be less ourselves, but more. Sanctification is not the death of personality but its full flowering.

Each day is an opportunity for the new creature to grow. Every choice of love over selfishness, every moment of obedience, every surrender of our own will — all contributes to the process of being conformed to the image of Christ. And one day, when we see him face to face, the work will be complete. *"We shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."*