

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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by – Stuart H. Pouliot

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Begotten of God to Believe

Every one who is believing that Jesus is the Christ, of God he hath been begotten.... (1 John 5:1 Young's Literal Translation [YLT])

Every one who believes that Jesus is the Anointed One, has been begotten by God.... (1 John 5:1 Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott [WED])

Two translations of the same verse have been presented because they highlight the word *begotten*.

According to the *New Englishman's Greek-English Concordance and Lexicon* (Wigram-Green, 1982), the Greek verb *gennāo* means "**to procreate, to father, to beget.**" Notice that the emphasis is on the father, not so much on the mother. In scripture, it is the father who begets and the mother who births. The two are needed, but it always starts with the father, for he is the one who gives and the mother is the one who receives. Thus, we read: **Abraham begat** [*gennāo*] **Isaac, and Isaac begat** [*gennāo*] **Jacob, and Jacob begat** [*gennāo*] (Matthew 1:2 YLT). The begetting is from the father, for, in the natural realm, he provides the seed.

In the same manner, *being begotten by God* signifies that God has planted His spirit-seed in those who are destined by His authority to become sons of God. John tells us that being begotten by God means His seed abides within the one begotten, and this seed is His Son in spirit, the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9).

No one who has been begotten by God practices sin; because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten by God. (1 John 3:9 WED)

By the way, John was not stating that a child of God can never sin again; he simply meant that the seed within cannot sin, for it is of God. The seed is to grow up to be a son in the image of the Son (1 John 3:2) so that the Father can adopt him (Romans 8:23), that is, place him in charge of (to reign in) His kingdom in the ages to come.

Now, this is all background information for the revelation that came to me today regarding 1 John 5:1. It is imagined that, with very few exceptions, this verse is interpreted to mean that we must first believe and then God plants His seed in us. In other words, we first believe that Jesus is the Anointed One (Christ), and then, on this basis alone, God begets us. Essentially, this interpretation states that it is up to us to figure out (our so-called *free will*) and accept who Jesus is and, when we do, something happens. To most Christians, this is the process of being saved. But is it scriptural? Based on John and others, the answer appears to be a big "no." Which comes first, the begetting or the believing? This is an easy one; it is not like: Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?

To answer this, consider what happens in the natural realm. The father impregnates the mother (begets a child) and a fetus is formed that nine months later comes out of the womb (birthed) as an infant. Did the child have any say in the process of conception and birth? No! When the child came out, did it immediately cry out, "Daddy and mommy"? No! The point is that the father alone starts the process. Of course, the mother is a major player in the process, but it is up to the father to beget. The mother does not beget; she births. Becoming a child (son) starts with the father, not the child (son). Since God is the one who created this natural order, should we not expect that it is the same in the spiritual realm? After all, Paul tells us that the natural comes first and then the spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:46). Thus, childhood (sonship) starts with God the Father, not the believer.

So, to understand what John stated in 1 John 5:1, we need to start with the Father, not with the believer. Stated differently, we need to start with the impregnating, not with the believing. If you follow the logic so far, there is only one conclusion to be made; God the Father must beget first in order for anyone to believe and, even, to cry out "Abba, Father." Or yet, stated another way, God must do something in us before we can even believe that His Son is the Anointed One, and this something is giving us His Spirit (spirit-seed) so that we can believe. This is exactly what John tells us in his gospel. Believing in Jesus is of God!

(12) But to as many as received him, he gave authority to become children [sons] of God, to those believing into [in] his name; who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God [of God were begotten]. (John 1:12-13 Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott [YLT])

Again, the order might (and generally does) lead most to conclude that believing comes first and entirely from man, but this cannot be the meaning of this verse. John is simply referencing the ones that are in view, that is, the ones that have been given the authority to become children of God. But, it is on the basis of the last part of the verse that they believe in the first place. They must be begotten of God; impregnated with His seed. They are not given authority or the right to become children or sons of God based on their blood (pedigree, genealogy, etc.), or their flesh (circumcision as a Jew), or their will (free or otherwise). For the benefit of those holding to *free* will as the starting place for salvation, let us reword it as "not of the *free* will of man." In other words, it is not up to man; it is entirely up to God. If this is hard to accept, then consider Paul's testimony.

(13) Though I was previously a blasphemer and a persecutor and had been insolent in outrage. Yet mercy was shown me, because I had acted ignorantly, not having as yet believed; (14) and the grace of our Lord came to me in overflowing fulness, conferring faith on me and the love which is in Christ Jesus [with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus] (1 Timothy 1:13-14 Weymouth's New Translation [NASB])

Now, let us not forget that Paul is the apostle of the nations (if you prefer, "of the gentiles"), and he is telling us [the nations] that on the road to Damascus he was given the grace, faith, and love of our Lord. Grace, faith, and love come from Jesus who is also **the Author and Perfecter of faith** (Hebrews 12:2). He gives us His faith to believe, and His faith becomes our faith. He's the Author of faith. Paul made no assertion that he figured it out on his own or that he applied something called *free* will. The Lord appeared and Paul was given grace, faith, and love. Using John's language, Paul was begotten. Again, he tells us so in another verse.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20 KJV)

Notice that he lived *by the* faith of the Son of God. Most translations incorporate their *interpretative bias* into this by stating "faith in the Son." In this case, the King James translation seems to have gotten it right. If you still have doubt, then consider one more verse from Paul.

(15) But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased (16) to reveal His Son in me.... (Galatians 1:15-16 NASB)

Paul was first set apart in the womb (begotten in the womb), then called through God's grace, and then God the Father revealed that His Son was in him; the mystery of **Christ in you** (Colossians 1:27). Using John's language, Paul was first begotten of God with the seed of His Son. The implications of this truth are tremendous, not only for believers of this age but for all mankind, **for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth** (1 Timothy 2:3-4 KJV).

God is love; God so loves the world; God wills all men to be saved; Jesus is the Way and the Truth and the Life and the Savior of the [whole] world; Jesus is the Son of God's love; **Love never fails!** This truly is good news!

For more on *free* will, see Article #56 (June 2013), *Man's [Free] Will vs. God's Will* [reedit of previous article]. <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art56.html>