

THE NEW BIRTH

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Chapter 7 – Change of Desires and Growth in Virtues

Change of desires is another aspect of the transformation. Led and motivated by the Divine Love within, we'll start desiring the things of God, rather than the things of the world. But conscious choices are still required because following godly desires does not happen automatically. Therefore on numerous occasions, God's children are exhorted to be aware of their desires and not follow those that are unwholesome.

Romans 6:12 – Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Romans 8:5 – Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit [Divine Love] have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Romans 13:14 – Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ [Divine Love], and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Galatians 5:16-17, 24 – So I say, live by the Spirit [Divine Love], and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. Those who belong to

Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Ephesians 4:22-24 – You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, a created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Colossians 3:5 – Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

James 1:14-15 – ... Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

1 Peter 1:14 – As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance [before understanding and receiving the Divine Love].

1 Peter 2:11 – Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

1 John 2:17 – The world and its desires pass away [sin will eventually be eradicated from the universe], but the man who does the will of God lives forever [because he possesses immortality].

Change of Desires and Growth in Virtues

As our desires change and as we follow spiritual desires, we grow in virtues. Through the New Birth – Divine Love flowing into our souls – we come into right relationship with God, the ultimate goal of which is atonement through complete soul transformation, or rebirth of the soul. A person who is born again/anew will have the external evidences of a good life because they are motivated by God’s Love from within. That doesn’t mean that they will never sin or succumb to temptation. But as they become more aware of their desires and follow those that spring from Love within, their life will be more and more virtuous, kind and loving as well as manifesting the “fruit of the Spirit” listed in Galatians 5 and the virtues listed in 2 Peter 1.

Galatians 5:22-23 – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

2 Peter 1:5-8 – For this very reason, *make every effort* [our cooperation is required] to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, *they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive* in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Change of Desires and Growth in Virtues

To sum up, as we continuously choose to follow the inner guidance of the Divine Love, our desires for material things will diminish as our priorities change. Instead, spiritual pursuits will be gain in importance. We will also be motivated to act in love and kindness, experience faith and peace, and grow in self-control. All this will not happen automatically, however. Our free will needs to be exercised and right choices consciously made. As more of our soul is transformed, loving choices will become more and more second nature.