

You Were Made to Last Forever

By **Reverend Richard Fisher**

Hospice Chaplain (retired)
www.youlastforever.com

(revised 2018; first published in two parts in Come Follow by Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship, Fall/Winter 2008, and Spring 2009)

You were made to last forever. This sounds amazing. We all pass funeral homes and cemeteries that argue otherwise. As a hospice chaplain ministering in the shadow of death, I comfort terminally ill patients and their families. Frequently I talk with them about the three phases of a person's existence. So far you have experience from the first two phases of your existence: in your mother's womb, and in this world. The third and last phase is the longest: in eternity. Each of us has already made one transition from the womb to this world. Now we are moving through this world towards what awaits us in eternity. Moving from phase to phase as a unique person created in the image of God, you retain your identity forever even though you go through many changes in your journey.

While living next door to eternity, I have developed a gospel presentation entitled, "You Were Made to Last Forever." Through materials I've written, my website gospel video, and by training other Christians, I make the saving power of Christ known. (www.youlastforever.com)

Praise God that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a fire escape by which sinners may flee as John the Baptist warned from the wrath to come! (Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7) In my hospice work, I try to "run a rescue shop within a yard of Hell," to borrow missionary great CT Studd's description. However, fear of death or of God's wrath must be accompanied by other reasons for people to trust and remain faithful to Jesus as Savior.

Jesus called people to himself in many different ways, and often used the physical to explain the spiritual. Perhaps the best-known encounter was his night time conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. Studies indicate that a person usually has had at least six serious spiritual conversations before he becomes a Christian.

Consider Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3:6, "That which is begotten/born of the flesh is flesh and that which is begotten/born of the Spirit is spirit." Human nature is comprised of flesh (body) and spirit. You can trace physical life, but not spiritual life back through your ancestors to the first humans, Adam and Eve. We

do not inherit spiritual life like we did physical life. Every person is born with a spirit but not spiritual life to serve God. Our first parents brought the corruption of sin into human nature. To paraphrase an excellent article in the English Standard Version of the Bible (Ligonier), each person is born into this world structurally as the image of God, but do not serve the Creator functionally as the image-bearers of God.

Jesus referred Nicodemus to his physical body and life to illustrate what must happen for any person to have spiritual life. The physical process from conception to death is personal, universal, and serves well as an “eye or heart opener” to help people understand spiritual life that transcends barriers of race, culture, language, and inherited religion or traditions.

Based on John 3:6, the following is true for Christians and those who will become Christians:

1. Your physical beginning at conception illustrates the beginning of your spiritual life at regeneration.
2. Your physical growth in the womb illustrates your spiritual life and growth in this world in union with Christ by faith.
3. Your physical birth illustrates the physical and spiritual transformations that will occur when you die, and what will occur when you are resurrected and glorified to live with God forever in Heaven.

1) Your physical beginning at conception illustrates the beginning of your spiritual life.

No one is a self-starter for physical or spiritual life. Both forms of life must come as gifts from outside the person. The baby has no physical existence before conception. A sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, has no spiritual life before regeneration. Life must come from the larger world to which the person is going. If the physical or spiritual life is not given the individual is nonexistent or lifeless.

The baby does not choose his parents, his race, gender, intelligence, genetic makeup, family tree, or time and place in history to be born. Does this sound like predestination? We can rejoice, give thanks and share, but not boast in what we have received. (I Cor. 4:7)

A baby is conceived in the image of his parents. Similarly, every person bears the image of God as shown by personality, creativity, intelligence and conscience. However, the image of God in us has been defaced since Adam’s original sin. As a consequence, spiritual and physical death entered into the world. Listen as a pre-born baby might express this waywardness:

“I don’t believe there is a Mom.”
“I wonder if there is a Mom.”
“I’ll decide who my biological Mother will be.”
“I am in charge here.”
“I think this womb is all there is.”
“I think I will just keep coming back here, maybe in a different form.”
“No one knows whether there is life after being born.”

Like the pre-born baby quoted above, people deny and disobey the very God who sustains them. By nature, each person has a spirit but not spiritual life. A person may be physically born into a religion, but religion is not spiritual life with God. To remedy what the first Adam lost, the last Adam came down from heaven as God in human flesh and “a life-giving spirit.” (John 1:14; 3:16; I Corinthians 15:45)

If anyone claims to have come down from Heaven (or eternity, the third phase of Christians’ existence), it is incumbent upon each of us to check out his credentials. If the claimant has no credentials in Heaven, then he has no credibility on Earth. Plenty of religions want to tell us “how to go up.” Only one religious leader claimed and proved that He came down out of Heaven to give life to the world. (John 6:33; 20:30f)

Jesus’ matchless credentials include:

His fulfillment of all Old Testament messianic prophecies,
His virgin birth,
His miracles, teaching and claims as God,
His sacrificial death on the cross to redeem sinners,
His bodily resurrection from the dead, and
His ascension into Heaven.

All Jesus’ credentials were confirmed by many witnesses and recorded in the New Testament. Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6) I hope that you have accepted Christ’s gracious invitation.

Regeneration is receiving spiritual life from God who thus empowers you to repent, believe in Jesus Christ and be saved from your sins. Regeneration parallels the conception and subsequent birth of a baby who receives physical life as a gift from a world he cannot see or understand, but is being prepared for. At conception, the baby has all the DNA necessary for human life. Likewise, in regeneration God gives all things necessary for spiritual life as a child of God. (I Peter 1:3; I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18)

In Psalm 51:5, King David confessed, "I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." David did not become a sinner when he was born, but nine months earlier when he was begotten or conceived. What a wonderful contrast is given when spiritual life arrives, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things are passed away, all things are become new." (II Corinthians 5:17)

2) Your physical growth in the womb illustrates your spiritual life and growth in this world in union with Christ by faith.

Faith in Jesus is like an invisible spiritual umbilical cord by which the Christian feeds continually upon the Word of God for the Bread of Life and living water. (Matt. 4:4; John 6:58; 7:37-39) The child of God no longer delights in the Devil's enticing smorgasbord. Just as a pre-born baby is sustained and protected by the unseen source that gave the baby life, a Christian is fed, and protected by the invisible God who imparts and sustains spiritual life. In God, Christians live, move, and exist physically and spiritually. (Eph. 2: 1-10; Heb. 11:6; I Cor. 13:9-12; Acts 17:28; Romans 8:32)

Bodily waste from the developing baby must be carried away. So too must we repent and confess our sins to receive God's forgiveness. Otherwise the pre-born baby would die in his waste and the sinner would die in his sins. (Acts 2:38; I John 1:7- 10)

While we cannot choose our physical mother, we should choose our spiritual mother (i.e., home church) wisely. "...Particular churches ... are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them." (Westminster Confession of Faith XXV, iv) Just as a pre-born baby would be deformed or doomed if the life-sustaining umbilical cord were to be clamped off, those who profess Christ thrive best in local Bible-based congregations. There they may be consistently fed by the Word, prayer, and Sacraments and protected by the spiritual oversight of biblical elders. Parents are vigilant for their baby's proper development and safe arrival. Likewise, effective spiritual caregivers must be vigilant until those under their care see the Lord. (Hebrews 5:11-6:12)

An expectant couple feels the "already and not yet" excitement of having a baby before the child's arrival. Similarly angels rejoice over each sinner who repents even before the new child of God reaches his eternal home. A Christian is seated in the heavenly places in Christ while anticipating the time when he is saved to sin no more. The believer is under no condemnation though he is not yet on the other side of the Great White Throne Judgment. (Romans 8:1; Matt. 7:21; II Cor. 13:5; Rev. 20:11-15) The goodness of God that Christians already enjoy in union

with Christ sustains them on a sometimes arduous pilgrimage to the celestial city. (Heb. 11:13-16)

Nine months are usually necessary to produce a healthy baby. Many of us will not know when we are one day short of being full-term to leave this world and enter into eternity. Any life in this world is short and people of all ages die. As delivery nears, the baby is cramped, feels less at home in the womb, and longs for a larger space. Christians identify with the Apostle Paul who yearned to depart and to be with Christ. Yet for the good of the Church he served faithfully to the end. (Phil. 1:23-25) May we be always ready, always serving until we meet the Lord. Parents want their child to be with them where they are. Even more so, Jesus is preparing a place for all Christians to be with him and behold his glory. (John 14:1-3; 17:24)

3) Your physical birth illustrates the physical and spiritual transformations that will occur when you die and what will occur when you are resurrected and glorified to live with God forever in Heaven.

As I remember, no one clued me in on what this world was like before I was born. Nor could I have predicted what I would become in this world all the while remaining the same individual my mother conceived and carried. A Christian imperfectly understands what it means to be made perfectly holy at death and then to be reunited as a perfect soul in a perfect body at the resurrection. (I Cor. 13:9-12)

The Apostle John wrote, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (I John 3:2f.). Your corruptible, perishable, weak and mortal body will be raised incorruptible, imperishable, glorious and immortal. We shall be changed wonderfully. As we have borne in this life the image of the earthly Adam in corruption, guilt, suffering and brokenness, we also shall bear forever the image of the heavenly Christ in His holiness, perfection and glory. (I Corinthians 15:49-54; Romans 8:29)

Late reformed theology professor Geerhardus Vos glimpsed the resurrection panorama and described it in these words,

The resurrection constitutes, as it were, the womb of the new aeon, out of which believers issue as, in a new, altogether unprecedented sense, sons of God... This whole idea of the anastasis (resurrection) as a genesis into a higher world opens up the largest conceivable perspective into a life of new structure and new potencies for the entire state of the Christian man. (The Pauline Eschatology, p.156, Eerdmans, 1972)

In his *Hymn to God, my God, in My Sickness*, poet John Donne (1573-1631) was likely mistaken on his geography, but accurate on vital piety when he wrote,

We think that Paradise and Calvary,
Christ's cross, and Adam's tree, stood in one place;
Look, Lord, and find both Adams met in me;
As the first Adam's sweat surrounds my face,
May the last Adam's blood my soul embrace.

Brothers and sisters, you were made in the image of God to last forever. You were redeemed at the cost of God's beloved Son and predestinated to be conformed to his glorious image. The same God who gave you physical life also gave you spiritual life to trust in His Son and be saved. As you journey towards Heaven in your wondrous physical body, you must feed spiritually on the Bread of Life. Walk by faith, not by sight. Travel and eat with those of like precious faith.

Christ came down out of heaven "to do us poor sinners good." He is the firstborn from the dead and guarantees that you have not lived your best days yet. The best is yet to come. Earthly mortality will be swallowed up by the heavenly life God has prepared for his children. In the ages to come God will show us "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:7)

Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
all you who remain of the house of Israel,
you whom I have upheld since you were conceived,
and have carried since your birth.

Even to your old age and gray hairs
I am he, I am he who will sustain you.
I have made you and I will carry you;
I will sustain you and I will rescue you." (Isaiah 46:3, 4 NIV)

You were made not only to last forever but to live forever with God, your Creator and your Redeemer. Hallelujah!

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*. If you would like to discuss this article in our online community, please visit our [RPM Forum](#).

Subscribe to RPM

RPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like RPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [RPM](#), please select this [link](#).