

*(John 3:3-7) <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”...<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’*

## **I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW**

- A. The gospel of grace is *mostly* a declaration of things that have happened *to us*. Events and happenings that transpired that had a shocking and dramatic affect upon the Christian. The important part is that *they happened*, and that *they happened to us*. Birth is like that.
- B. A birth is something that happens to a baby, certainly not something that the baby *does*. No one looks at the newborn and says, “Fantastic work! You did it!”
- C. Through the *turmoil*, and *agony*, and *blood* of the mother a beautiful child is brought forth. The cross is like that. We must look at the glorious suffering Christ and joyfully declare, “Fantastic work! You did it!”
- D. The message of the new birth was given to Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin. This reality of the new birth is not just for the down-and-outers. Jesus introduces an entirely new idea to Nicodemus, not that a person must be born again, but that Nicodemus must be born again.
- E. That is why the new birth message is pertinent to the religious and the churchgoer. On whose work have we been brought into the family of God? Was it the work of the baby? Or the work of the mother? Was it the work of the believer, or the work of the Cross?
- F. What did the disciples and revivalist of old know that I do not? What was it about the riches of the grace of God that caused them to sing a song from another age; to live with a staggering devotion; to move in the power of the Holy Spirit; to rejoice with joy under trial and suffering; to seek with longing their cross rather than avoid it; to give sacrificially for all men even in lack and great destitution?

## **II. WHAT IS THE NEW BIRTH?**

- A. The new birth is where God makes the spirit of the *dead* alive through *faith* in Christ.

*(Eph. 2:1-3) <sup>1</sup>And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked according to the <sup>[a]</sup>course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup>among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.*

*(2 Cor. 5:17) <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

- B. Those not **born of the spirit** (see Jn. 3:5) are floating the river of this world headed to destruction by the wrath of God. They are not children of God, but children of His wrath. They will not allow another to pay their debt and divert God's wrath from them; they have chosen to pay their own debts and face the anger of the Lord.
- C. They walk according the ways of the world; under its power and dominion. Unable to free themselves from the chains of sin. The prince of the air is their god and master. They serve him in disobedience filling their bodies and minds with sinful desires.
- D. And yet in spite of their belligerence to continue in their way, loving darkness rather than light (Jn. 3:19) God, rich in mercy has chosen to intervene; to pluck souls from that river of filth, as one plucks brands from a fire.

***(Eph. 2:4-8) <sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,***

- E. At the new birth, the grace of God deposited into the human soul what could not be purchased with 10,000 kingdoms: the very righteousness of God. All things have become *new*.  
***(2 Cor. 5:21) <sup>21</sup> For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***

***(Rom. 3:21, 22) <sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all <sup>1f</sup> and on all who believe...***

### **III. MARKS OF THE NEW BIRTH**

- A. There must be some way then to determine if this inner transformation has taken place; surely, a tree is known by its fruits (Mt. 12:33) if we are truly born again by the spirit as described in the Word of God.
- B. Let us examine ourselves then; not for the sake of passing judgment on another, but to soberly and rightly scrutinize oneself; seeking to please the One who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. (Col. 1:13)
- C. David cried out, ***“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try [test] me, and know my anxieties [“thoughts” that do not align with truth]; <sup>24</sup> and see if there is any wicked [idol] way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”***
- D. I would rather be surprised *now* that my faith was weak and my spirit dull than at the judgment seat where it is appointed to man to die once (Heb. 9:27). I only get one shot.

*(1 John 3:20, 21) <sup>20</sup> For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. <sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.*

1. This morning, do our hearts condemn us?
2. Do we have confidence in our spiritual state to stand before the judgment?
3. Why wait to be cleansed from sin?

#### IV. #1 – A CONVICTION THAT CHRIST IS GOD

*(1 John 5:1) Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...*

*(Jn. 3:14, 15) <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

*(Acts 2:36) “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*

- A. The born again has put *their faith* solely in Christ as His Savior and made Him his God.
- B. Now there is this issue of faith. Faith must not remain as belief *only* for there is a difference. The aim of the gospel witness is not simply to get others believing that Christ lived and died – many believe that. But here is a difference, *belief* is a confidence that a higher power is able to do something; *faith* is allowing that power to do it.
- C. A man went to the circus and there the ring master motioned to the tight-rope-walker and said, “Who here *believes* that this man can walk this tight rope, suspended 50 feet in the air, while carrying over 100 pounds!” Immediately the hands of the entire crowd, and of the man, shot into the air. Then the ringmaster said, “Who here is willing to let him carry you?” Therein lies the difference between belief and faith.
  1. Faith in God is not just an understanding but also a change in *disposition*.
  2. It is a complete *reorientation* whereupon the individual ceases in attempting to ascend to God’s righteous throne and rather allows His holy person to ascend the throne of their heart.
  3. When Christ is the heart’s ultimate affection a *new life* is evident.
- D. Many may say they believe God has the power to forgive sin and regenerate the heart, but fewer *allow Him to do it*. They still hold that they must prove themselves to God in order for this to happen.
- E. The new birth is not just about renouncing sin and mistakes (even the unbeliever desperately wants to distance themselves from serious life errors), but about entirely *renouncing oneself*.

*<sup>15</sup> and [Christ] died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Cor. 5:15)*

V. #2 A DESIRE FOR HOLINESS

*1 John 2:29: “If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.”*

- A. The born again makes a practice of righteous deeds. He wants to do them. He finds an inner compulsion and joy to commit secret acts of goodness and service toward God and man because His soul delights in doing so.
1. He is not compelled to righteous works because of guilt, shame, or debt.
  2. He is not compelled to good deeds because he believes they will earn him God’s acceptance. Rather he rejoices in what is good because he has been made good.
- B. The born again believer that sins is not at rest. He does not make a practice of sinning because he longs to live at peace with the Spirit that dwells within him.

*1 John 3:9: “No one born of God makes a practice [manufacture; construct; make a path] of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.”*

1. A war rages within him much like the apostle Paul  
*(Rom. 7:22, 23) <sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. <sup>23</sup> But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*
2. Yet, even as this war rages, the born again does not sign the peace treaty with these sinful desires. He wars against them. He employs *every activity and power available to him* to fight the good fight (the Word of God, help from the Holy Spirit, confession and repentance, accountability, establishing boundaries that distance himself from temptation – see Eph. 6:11; Jas. 4:7; 1 Tim. 1:18, 6:12).

*1 John 5:18: We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.*

VI. #3 A SINCERE LOVE FOR OTHER BELIEVERS.

*1 John 4:7: “Beloved, let us love one another, for [this] love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”*

*(1 John 5:1, 2)... and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. <sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.*

- A. Now this brotherly love that John speaks of here is not the love that the world espouses. Worldly love is wildly conditional, hinges upon mutuality, and hangs by a thread. No, this is a spiritual love, a love from God, a divine love. A love that Jesus Himself defined is imparted to the born again Christian.

**<sup>12</sup> This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. (John 15:12, 13)**

- B. We see that the love of Jesus is defined in light of the sacrifice of the cross. A sacrifice of “self” for another. A “*you first*” mentality graces the life of the born again. This is no worldly, self-seeking love.

**<sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10)**

**<sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom. 5:10)**

1. This *divine love* self-initiates. It doesn't wait for a mutual response to act and act extravagantly.
2. Would that God have waited for humanity to look upon Him with the same affection, we would still be waiting for the Christ!
3. This is the type of the love is the brotherly love that Christ calls us to.

**<sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:11)**

- C. The world may tout its definitions love. But worldly love is false; its love is like the love pirates share for one another as they make war on the world.

- D. This *divine love* is what shines in the heart of the Christian - imparted at the new birth in accordance with Romans 5:5

**<sup>5</sup> Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Rom. 5:5)**

- E. Remember this was written by John the Beloved who had heard at the Lord at the upper room discourse speak on this “laying down of life, love” and then had witnessed the Lord be scourged and crucified. This is not some scholar far removed from the passion of our Lord. What a blazing image of love that must have established in the man's mind!