

# You Must Be Born Again, Part 3

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John 3:8

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Now when I was a kid, I grew up going to church and I grew up at a church where they talked a lot about the Holy Ghost. You had to say it like that, the Holy Ghost. Now as a kid, I knew about Ghostbusters and I knew about Casper the Friendly Ghost and I knew about this other ghost called the Holy Ghost. Thankfully modern Bibles uh, call him the Holy Spirit, that's much easier to grasp, but although not, not completely. I would suggest that he is one of the most misunderstood figures in the Bible.

Now if you've been around church for any amount of time, you've heard about the Holy Spirit. Maybe you've wondered when people say Holy Spirit, maybe you've wondered, "What is it that people are talking about?" Well let me tell you about him, and I say him because the Holy Spirit is a person. He's not a force like gravity, he's not energy like electricity. He is alive, he thinks, he feels, he speaks, he makes choices, he teaches. The Holy Spirit can even be grieved.

When talking about him, Jesus calls the Spirit a he, not an it. He is just as much a person as you and me. He is also the third person of the Trinity, he's not a junior partner, he is just as divine as the Father and the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians Chapter 3, Verse 17, Paul has no problem using the divine name for the Spirit, saying, "The Lord is the Spirit." He is what only God can be when the Bible describes him as all-knowing, all-powerful, present everywhere, and eternal. He is also called the Holy Spirit. He is holy, he is separate from us. Like God, he is separate from us and he is morally pure, not even a hint of sin at all. He also does things only God can do. So he creates, he raises the dead, he gives physical life, he gives spiritual life, and like God and only like God, he can be blasphemed.

In the Bible, his work is from beginning to end. He's on the first page in Genesis 1:2 and he's on the last page in Revelation 22:17. He's also working from the beginning to the end of the Christian life. He works the very moment a person is saved. At that moment, there are things that happen instantly, immediately, within a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of a millisecond. At least nine eternity transforming things happen in that moment. Those things are calling, regeneration, union with Christ, conversion, redemption, justification, propitiation, reconciliation and adoption. All of that in one way or another is accomplished thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit.

And our text today, John 3:8, is about one of those nine events, the work of regeneration, also known as being born again or born from above or born of God or the new birth. In the new birth, the dead, corrupt sinner is washed clean of the spiritual death caused by sin. And at the same time, he is given new spiritual life. It's God's life now at home in your soul. Sin's infection, our complete inability to know and love God, that's completely reversed in the new birth. The core of your life, the depths of your soul, the real you is turned from self-heavenward. There's no part of you that remains unaffected by the new birth. The truths that you were blind to you now understand. Your emotions are now moved by the things of God instead of being repulsed by them. You now desire, deep in your soul, to please God. And in the Bible, this, this new birth is accomplished by all three members of the Trinity. So the Father births people again according to

James 1:18. Jesus gives life according to John 5:21. And in the text we just read, Jesus said that this supernatural work takes place when the Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, births people again.

And Jesus point in our text is that without this birth, no one goes to Heaven. Not a single person. In other words, Heaven must come to you first or you will never go to Heaven when you die. Nicodemus was a committed religious man. He was a distinguished member of society. He was part of the very elite of the elite of his day and on top of all of that he was the greatest Bible teacher of his day. He had everything, and Jesus is saying but without this one thing, nothing else matters. And I may be speaking to people right now who are just like him. You're committed to Christianity, you can't remember a time when you weren't in church. You even serve and you give and you evangelize the lost and you teach Bible studies and you know the Bible backwards and forwards. You have never been in a church service in the past decade where you didn't say to the pastor's sermon, "That was a good reminder." Because you already know it. You, you are, then add to that, a respected member of society, you've done a lot of good work, people look up to you wherever you go, and none of that matters for Heaven. You, I, we, everybody must be born again.

Hell will be filled with influential people that are respected in society. People what went to church and served and gave and told people about Jesus and taught Bible studies and on that day, when they stand before Jesus, they will tell him how wrong he is for sending them to hell because look at my resume of good works, I'm a great person, I did all of this for you Jesus, and he will say to them, Matthew 7:23, what? "I never knew you. Depart from me."

The one thing necessary, the one requirement for Heaven is the new birth. And in the last two messages, we've learned seven truths about the new birth. We've learned that the new birth is a second birth. It is a spiritual birth in addition to your physical birth. Second, it's a heavenly birth, it's a birth from above, it's being born of God. It's also a purifying birth that cleanses from sin, that sort of means that it's being born of water. Fourth, it's a divine birth because it's being born of the Holy Spirit. Fifth, it's an instantaneous birth, it's not a process, it's a point in time. Just like birth. Six, it's a complete birth. No one is born halfway physically and spiritually. Like, like nobody has one foot in hell and the other foot in Heaven. The new birth is completed, finished, once for all time birth. Seventh and finally, it is a necessary birth. You must be born again. Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven. Heaven is shut without the new birth. You may be born a second time, no. You must be born a second time or you will not enter the kingdom of God. Born only once and you will die twice. You will die physically and you will die spiritually. Born twice and you will only die once. You will die physically, but after that moment, you will live forever.

So have you been born again? If you have, it's because the Holy Spirit worked in your life, and to a man who asks in Verse 4 how can these things be, Jesus answers him, answers that question in Verse 8. "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." So how can a man be born when he is old? Answer, he can be born a second time but only if he is born from above. And that happens when the Spirit gives that man life.

Now that man can be old or he could be young. He could be rich or poor, educated, uneducated, big, small. He can be from any tribe, any language, any people group, any nation. He can be a part of the elite of the elite like Nicodemus or the Apostle Paul, or he could be the scum of the

earth like Matthew the tax collector or Mary Magdalene who many think was a prostitute. Jesus gives Nicodemus an illustration here in Verse 8, where he compares the Spirit's work in the new birth to the wind. How the Spirit works in the new birth is seen first in these words, in Verse 8, "The wind blows where it wishes." Stop there. In other words, the wind is free. It's independent. Using a nerdy theological word, the wind is sovereign. We can't control it, we can't tell it to come here, we can't tell it to go there, we can't, we can't stop the wind from blowing, we can't make the wind increase or decrease at all. We are powerless before it, we do not affect it one bit. The House can pass a law, the Senate can agree with it, the, the president can sign it into law, telling the wind what to do. And all of that earthly power will have zero effect on the wind whatsoever.

Why? Notice the text. "The wind blows where it wishes." Not as we wishes. Its location is not determined by us, it doesn't ask us what we want it to do. We can't regulate it with our technology, it blows where it wants, when it wants, as much as it wants, for as long as it wants. The wind is completely free to do whatever it wants. Now this is an analogy, this is an illustration. So what Jesus is saying is the same thing is true for being born again, so point number one, ***Confess the Spirit's freedom in the new birth. 1) Confess the Spirit's freedom in the new birth.*** Like the wind, the Spirit is free to take the new birth wherever he wants. He is not bound by anything we do, think, say or want. He does as he pleases and only as he pleases because he is sovereign with the new birth. He is independent and uncontrollable by human beings, we don't control him with prayer, we don't tell him what to do with our faith. We don't confine his work to some ritual like baptism, we don't control him with mood lighting, soft music, or repeated choruses. People in Nicodemus' day tried to control salvation by being Jewish and by being obedient to God's rules, but Jesus is saying to him right here, salvation is not under your control at all. You have as much control over salvation as you do over the wind.

See as the God the Holy Spirit in the words of Daniel 4:35 does according to his will in the host of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the Earth, and no one can stop him from doing what he wants to do. In the words of Psalm 115:3, the Spirit "does whatever he pleases." Whatever he pleases he does in Heaven and on Earth according to Psalm 135:6. So just from these verses, and just from this illustration with the wind, it's clear that the freedom of the Spirit extends to everything in Heaven and everything on Earth, all places he is, he is, free to act. And if his freedom extends to Heaven and Earth, then that would include salvation. Salvation happens on Earth, salvation affects Heaven. And we see this freedom in John 1:13, where it says that people are born again "not of blood". Meaning your ethnicity, your ancestry doesn't save you. Just because your parents are born again doesn't mean you're born again.

Second, that people are born again is not "of the will of the flesh." Meaning you can't earn it, you can't work for it, you can't even want it so that because the fact that you want it it will happen, that's, that's not there either. And third, that people are born again is not "of the will of man." Meaning other people can't want it for you, other people can't do it for you. Other people can't say, "I give you being born again, here you go." Doesn't happen. It must be done not for us, it must be done to us when Verse 13 you are 100% born of God.

Speaking about how people are saved in Romans 9:15, God declares his own freedom in salvation when he says, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy. I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." And then in Verse 16, Paul explains this by saying, "So then salvation, receiving God's mercy, does not depend on human will." Receiving God's mercy, being saved, does not depend on human will or exertion. Trying to earn it, trying, trying to kill

yourself doing good works to prove to God I'm saved, I need to be saved, I should be in Heaven. Salvation depends not on human will or exertion, but it depends on God, who has mercy.

When the Spirit is blowing, when he's bringing the new birth to people, wherever and whenever he wishes, what is driving him is mercy. What is propelling him towards sinners is compassion. God's not, it's because God's not obligated to save anybody, right? He's free. Nobody forces God to do anything. He is, He's, He's good and because he's good, he will punish sin. See some people receive justice, they get what they deserve for their crimes, and it is awful, and it is something that we should work tirelessly to help people see that reality and flee from that reality. But in the end, some will receive justice. They'll get what they deserve for their crimes. Others receive mercy. They get the opposite of what they deserve for their crimes because Jesus got the justice they deserved for their crimes where? On the cross.

In the end, all sin is punished. In the end, no one is sinned against by God. Justice is deserved. It is what we are owed for our sins. Mercy is a gift. It is the opposite of what we deserve. Mercy is given in spite of what we deserve. Mercy is freely given not because we earn it, not because it's ours by right or by birth or by our efforts. God the Holy Spirit is 100% free to give life in the words of the text where he wishes. So the question is can you confess this? Can you embrace it, can you admit it, can you agree with it? If you can, if you can agree that behind your salvation is the Spirit's merciful freedom in giving you the new birth, that it was a work that he did, 100%, without any of your help, then listen. The more that settles in on your soul, the more that will come out of your soul, his gratitude and humility and worship, right?

Why? Because the wind blew. The wind passed this person and came to that person. It passed this wife to grab the husband, it grabbed this husband and not the wife, it passed this child and that child to grab that one. It passed this house to go to that one and that neighborhood to go to that one and that that country to go to that one. And at the end of the day, when you put it all together, if the Spirit has blown the new birth into your life, then you are infinitely blessed. No matter what's going on, no matter what you've done, no matter what has been done to you, you are infinitely blessed if you have the new birth.

Listen, I know this might be a new teaching for many of you or it may be, may be hard to understand or hard to accept. But the question you should ask yourself is, "Is what I'm hearing right now biblical? Does it match what the Bible says?" Because Jesus is saying with this illustration like the wind, the Spirit is free in the new birth. He does it 100%. And, and there is a difference, right, between paying, paying for dinner and splitting the check, right? Well the new birth is not a split check where you did your part and God did his. He didn't even pay most of it and you slipped in your nickel. Salvation is all about God's full and free mercy to enslaved rebels who were set free when he washed us and gives new life when he gives people the new birth.

Now Jesus continues describing the Spirit's work of regeneration in Verse 8, he says the wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. The next description Jesus gives of the wind has to do with how mysterious it is. Right, we know it's there, Jesus focuses on the fact that we can hear the wind. But we don't know where it came from, we don't know where it's going. Now Jesus says this without modern meteorology but he says it as someone on the ground, who's experiencing the wind in that moment. That that gust of wind that you feel, that gentle breeze, we don't know where that was before it came to us and we don't know where it's going after us. Wind in that sense is a mystery.

Now going back to the analogy, the same is true for the new birth, so point number two, ***Acknowledge the mysterious reality of the new birth. 2) Acknowledge the mysterious reality of the new birth.*** It's a reality the wind, you can hear the wind. So you know it's there, it's real. But while being real, it's also mysterious. Like the wind, the work of the Spirit when he gives people the new birth is mysterious. Where he was before coming to us, where he goes after us, how exactly he performs the new birth, all of that is total mystery. It's especially a mystery because Jesus is clear, all manmade ways that we think force him to work, force him to give them new birth, he's like they don't force him at all (audible laugh). He does what he wants. So ancestry, ethnicity, rituals that people make up, like baptism and confirmation, prayers, rites of passage, obedience to the Bible, traditions, quivers in your liver, scheduled revivals, we're going to say we're going to have a revival on this day at this time." None of that forces the Spirit to do anything. If they did, he wouldn't be free, and if they did, there wouldn't be a mystery. You'd be able to say, "Well, here's how you do it. You just do these things." No, there's a mystery to this.

Now I want to have a little nerd moment with you here. I want to dig into this idea of mystery by pointing out to you in this text six reasons why the Spirit's work is an impossible thing for us to figure out. All of these happened, everything I'm going to say happens in that fraction of a fraction of a millisecond, when, when a person is saved. The work of the Spirit and the new birth is mysterious because first it is invisible, right? Like the wind, we can't see the Spirit work. It happens beyond our ability to notice what he's doing exactly. It's not like this light shows up and comes into our lives, a person like reaches into our chest invisibly and turns this on, like like we don't see anything. There's nothing, and you don't have like a glow now. Like, "Whoa, look at that, like I'm growing." It is completely invisible, the new birth.

Second, his work is unpredictable. Like the wind, there's no pattern to the work of the Spirit. You can't set up rules and regulations for how or when or who he regenerates. For some, his work is a gentle ... you know, it's gentle like a breeze. For others, it's violent like a tornado in a person's soul. For some, it happens at church. For others it happens somewhere else. He saves this one and not that one. No one can know who he's going to save or when he's going to save, nobody knows how he's going to save, there's no pattern that's like, "Okay, that happened to you, so that happens for everybody." It's not. It's unpredictable, just like the wind.

Third, the Spirit's work of regeneration is unconscious. Like you not knowing about the wind, the fraction of a millisecond of the new birth can pass without you being conscious of it. You don't get some kind of warm peaceful feeling and you're like, "There it is. Got it now." No, completely unconscious. We know it's real, why? Because just like the wind, we know the effects of it. We see our lives change, we see the change deep inside of us, but we ultimately don't know in the moment that it happens, it's unconscious.

Fourth, the work of the new birth is unrepeatable. Unrepeatable, just like birth and just like the same wind never hits the same place twice. So the new birth doesn't happen to the same person more than once. Once born, always born. No one is born again and then they're unborn and then they're born again again and then they're unborn and born again again again. Like that's not how this whole thing works. Nobody is born again and again and again again and again. This birth, this work, is permanent.

Fifth, the Spirit's work is irresistible. Irresistible, like the wind that cannot be stopped. So when the new birth is given, it cannot be stopped either. Like birth, we're just along for the ride. When the Spirit is giving new life, he's the one doing the work.

And finally number six, his work is active. Active, just as the Spirit's activity happens to us, just like the wind's activity happens to us, just like the wind's activity doesn't happen by us, so the Spirit's work in the new birth happens to us. It doesn't depend on us. We receive his work. We don't cause his work. We don't cause ourselves to be born again. We don't blow the wind on ourselves, we don't blow the wind on others and we don't cooperate with the Spirit either so that together, we produce our new birth. This work is a result of his initiative, what he wishes. It's the result of his activity, not ours.

Just think about the other analogies for this in the New Testament. The new birth is called becoming a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17, think about it. Do we create ourselves? Do we help God in our creation? Answer ... Man, that was ... There's a lot of passion behind that no, (audible laughing). We got two more chances here. In Ephesians 2:5, in Colossians 2:13, the new birth is called coming to life. So do dead people come to life because they want to? Do the dead raise themselves? Can a dead man assist in his own resurrection? Was Lazarus in the tomb going, "Okay Jesus, you and me, let's do this thing." Answer?

No.

No, there we go! And the new birth is also called being born. In John 3 and 1 John 2 and 3 and 4 and 5. So do babies give birth to themselves? Do babies help their mothers when they're born? Is birth a result of mom and baby pushing together? Answer?

No.

No. Sin's corruption is too extensive, and it's too damaging and because that is ... Because of those things, it's just impossible for us to ever overcome sin apart from God doing it for us. He must do it all. The corruption of sin must be done away with by him. We can fight sin after that because we have God's Spirit living in us, but before that, we got nothing. Before the new birth, we can be active in many ways, after the new birth, we're active in many ways. At the moment of the new birth, we are completely passive. If we did something, it wouldn't be free, and if we did something, there would not be a mystery. We'd go, "Just do this thing, and you'll be born again." But we do nothing. Something happens to us. What happens? We are cleansed. Which means that somebody else cleans us from our sins. And we are given new life. Meaning someone, the Spirit, gives life to us when he does this mysterious work in our souls.

So if you've been born again, let me ask you, do you remember the moment? Do you remember the moment that happened? For some reason, I can remember that moment. I know where I was, I know what I was looking at, I can see it in my mind still, 26 years later. I know who was there, I know what we were all doing, I know what I was thinking in that moment. I was at a youth group hanging out and the only reason I was there is because I wanted to be with the girls, that was it. That was it. I was going through the motions, the pastor was there, sitting in a circle, there was probably 20 of us and he's like, "Just tell us what what God's doing in your life," and I thought, "Oh my goodness. Please don't start with me, please don't start with me." So he didn't, he started with somebody else. And I listened to all these kids talking about what God is doing in their life, and I heard one guy, I can see his face, Ryan, and what Ryan said I just thought, "I'm going to say what he said."

There's nothing in me that cared about God. I had no desire to talk about him or hear about him. But in a moment, as everyone's getting ready to go in their cars and leave for the mall, which is all I wanted to do, in that moment, my everything changed. Everything. His grace, his compassion for me personally became unmistakable. And in that moment, the only response I

can make was, "I will give you my life." And from that moment until this day, I've lived for him. Not perfectly obviously. But that's been the direction, the goal, the ambition of my life ever since.

Now listen, I know everybody can't say that. I know everybody can't say I know the exact moment and I remember that moment. You'd be surprised how many people have told me that they do though. But here's the thing. Whether you can remember it or you can't, no one knows exactly how this whole thing happens deep in our souls, unconsciously, how the Spirit actually changes us. Nobody knows how it happens. We can acknowledge that before that moment, we're living for sin and self and after that moment we're living for Christ and we're still doing that to this day. But how the new birth happens? It's a total mystery. That it happens though is obvious, and it is obvious because of the effects that the new birth produces in a person's life. Just like the wind.

Look at Verse 8. "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound." We can't know what the wind wants or where it's going or where it came from, but we know that it's there, right? Because we can hear its sound. The text literally says you can hear its voice. You hear the wind speaking. Wind is just air moving, we know it's there because we can see its effects. We know it's there because we can feel its effects and we know it's there because as the one that Jesus focuses on, you can hear its effects. Well like before, this too is an analogy, so being born again, you must identify the inevitable evidence of the new birth. This analogy for being born again, and if it is, point number three, identify the inevitable evidence for the new birth. So when God enters your life in the new birth, when you hear his voice using the words of Verse 8, when that happens, his life forever changes yours. God's life in your soul will bring God's life out of your soul.

See, uh, uh, when a bad tree becomes a good tree, we know it's become a good tree because of the good fruit that it produces. If there is no fruit, then what? Then there is no root. In other words, the effect of the new birth will be obvious, and it will become more and more obvious as time goes by. Now what is the evidence for the new birth? See the Book of John is all about believing in Jesus so that you will have eternal life. The Book of 1 John is about how to know that you have eternal life. And so what would be the marks that show me I've been born again? For that we go to 1 John, so turn to the Book of 1 John. Turn to 1 John Chapter 5. If you've got a Bible from an usher, 1 John Chapter 5 is on Page 1125. 1 John Chapter 5, Page 1125, very convenient.

1 John Chapter 5, starting in Verse 1. I'm going to give you five evidences, five proofs, five tests, five marks that the new birth has happened to you. The goal is that you see your biography in this text. That's my hope. The first proof of the new birth is faith in Jesus. Look at 1 John Chapter 5, Verse 1. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." The Greek here can be understood to say everyone who is currently believing that Jesus is the Christ has already been born of God. In other words, the text suggests that being born again came before believing in Jesus, that that we believe in Jesus because we're born again. The dead must be raised in order to act, right? In order to believe and repent, a person must first be alive. Acts 16:14 puts it this way, "The Lord opened a woman's heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul." That word pay attention in this context means to be devoted to.

So in order for this lady named Lydia to devote herself to Jesus, her heart had to first be what? Opened. She needed the new birth so that she could believe. She needed her heart to be open so

that she could devote herself to Christ. That opening of her heart had to happen first and then she could believe. Even in, even in John Chapter 3, the new birth is in Verses 4, Verses 3 to 8. Believing in Jesus is Verses 15 to 21. In the Book of Ephesians, Chapter 2, the new birth is in Verses 4 to 7, believing in Jesus in Verses 8 to 10. Why? Because the first evidence that the new birth has taken place is that you trust in Christ.

Second test for the new birth is that people believe in the correct Jesus, the only Jesus there is, the biblical Jesus. Look at Chapter 5, Verse 1. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." One of the evidences of the new birth is that someone rejects the false Jesus that they previously believed in and they, and they trust in the real Jesus, the only one that exists, the Jesus of the Bible, the Jesus that the apostles preach. They trust in him now. This Jesus is God who became a human being. Who lived a sinless life, who died while receiving the penalty that sinners deserve for their sins. This Jesus who rose physically from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and will return one day as Earth's king to reign forever. That Jesus is the one that they will believe in and when they do, when they reject the false Jesus and embrace the true one, that is evidence that they've been born again.

Third, the inevitable evidence of the new birth is love. Look at Chapter 4, Verse 7. 1 John 4:7 says, "Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God." Love is evidence of the new birth. What, what was a self-centered, I-dominated, me monster becomes a lover of people. It's not perfect love, only God has perfect love but love is there. And as time goes by, love for others grows into selfless attitudes and others-focused activities coming out of your life, why? Because the God who is love lives inside of you and produces that love in your life.

The fourth proof that a person has been born again is seen in their obedience. Obedience, look at 1 John Chapter 2, Verse 29. 1 John 2:29. "If you know that he is righteous," talking about Jesus, "You can be sure that everyone who practiced righteousness has been born of him." Look at Chapter 3, Verse 9. Chapter 3, Verse 9. "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning." Why? Because God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning, why? Because he has been born of God.

One more passage. Turn to Chapter 5, Verse 18. 1 John 5:18. "We know," not guess, not wish, not hope, "We know that everyone who's been born of God does not keep on sinning." So like love, obedience is never perfect either, right? But when the holy righteous good God lives inside of you, then holiness, goodness, righteousness comes out of you. Yes, there's still sin left in us. There is a war between the flesh and the Spirit described in Romans 7, Romans 8, Galatians 5. That war is very real and that war will stay a reality until we go to Heaven. However in the new birth, there is a change that happens inside of you that changes the direction of your life. Meaning that now, what, what was once bent towards disobedience, now you're bent towards obedience. Now that's what you want to do. You want to do what he says, you want to keep the rules, you want to obey his commands, you want to please him as the motivation of your life, and you actually do it. It's not just like I really want this but I really don't. I really want it and I'm really going to go for it. Why? Because you've been born again. Why? Because this sinner bent on disobedience suddenly comes to life. You seek to live for him.

One final test that someone has been born again is that he or she will overcome the world. Overcome the world, look at Chapter 5, Verse 4. "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world." Well what's the world? The world is the collective expression of



disobedience to God, rebellion to God. So it's not an individual person's disobedience. So in the world, it's not individual people that he's talking about. He's talking about the collective expressions of hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands and millions who collectively express their rebellion together. And according to 1 John 2:15, in the world there is no love for God. The world is at war with God, and that war now has nothing to do with you. That world, that war, you look at that and go, "I, I don't want that anymore. I can't identify with that anymore." By bringing your life to him, by giving your life to him, the war is now over for you, and those who are still at war with God, you just don't fit with them anymore, right? Have you experienced that? These people that you've known for your whole life? Suddenly this happens and you're like, "I don't fit in. I don't know what to talk about with you anymore. I don't, we don't match. All the stuff that we talked about, I don't even want to talk about it anymore. I can't talk about it. Something's going on."

And at the same time, what else happens? You're like, "Gosh, I want to be around these nerdy church people." That was my first thought, when I got saved, I was like, "Why do I want to be around these nerds all the time? But I don't fit in with my friends anymore. Like what's going on here?" I had no category for what was going on. What was going on was that I was born again. And one of the evidences of that is that before you and God were enemies, now you and the world of hatred for God are enemies, because it doesn't have anything in it that you want anymore. It's empty. It doesn't satisfy. It's gross.

Now now is that because you like, you like, I don't know, somebody said to you, "Hey, that's gross," and you're like, "Yeah, I agree. Yeah, I think it's gross now." Or there's some kind of pressure put on you and, "Okay, okay, I think it's gross. But I don't really, it's awesome." No, it's because something was transformed on the inside, the very core of who you are, was transformed. It happened on the inside and it came out, it wasn't from the outside in.

Now the question is not perfection in any of these proofs, let me make that clear. We will all have varying degrees of each of these. We will trust Christ at different levels, we will know him accurately at different levels, we will love and obey and overcome at different levels. Some with more, some with less. The question is not how much of those things do you have, the question is what? Is it there at all? Is it there at all? The real question, are these five proofs present in your life at all, or are you trying to convince yourself that they're there when they're really not? Without regeneration, these five marks, these five tests, these five proofs are impossible. With regeneration, it's impossible to not have these five proofs in your life.

One of my profs put it this way, he said these these tests for the new birth are not multiple choice. Like, I'll, I'll take Jesus and I'll take some love, but get that obedience out of here. I don't want any of that, I'll do what I want. Or you know Jesus, he's awesome and uh yeah, yeah, yeah obedience. Love, that's weak. Get that out of here. No, when someone is born again, they will believe and they will believe in the right Jesus and they will love people and they will obey and they will overcome the world. It is impossible for someone who's been given new birth to fail to do these things. Why? Going all the way back to the point, the evidence of the new birth is inevitable.

Now throughout this series, many of you have asked me, either at the backdoor there or email or text messages, "So you're really pushing hard that we must be born again and you've said you can't make yourself born again," and so the question has been what? How do I know if I'm born again? Am I born again? Can I know if I'm born again? How can I know if I'm born again? Well

let me ask you, has your thinking, your trust and your living, what drives you, what's most important to you, has all of that changed? And not by something you did, but by something that was done to you, that you kind of can't explain, but it happened at your core? If so, you've been born again. If you don't know, if you're not sure, ask yourself, do I believe in Jesus? Am I trusting in him alone to save me? I'm not trusting in some organization, I'm not trusting in another person, I'm not trusting in my good works, I'm trusting in him and him alone and you're trusting, are you trusting in the right Jesus, the true Jesus, the Jesus of the Bible? Do you love people? Is a selfless, others-focused love, something that's been coming out of you more and more?

Same with obedience. Do you obey, do you seek to obey, can you look at your life and go, "I'm not perfect but I do see times when I'm obeying the Lord. I do see victory in my fight against sin." And is the world with all of its cares and passions and desires, is all of that overcoming you or are you overcoming the world? If you can say yes to all of that, then dear friend, you are born again. But if you can't say whether or not you're born again, if you can't look at those tests and go that's me, if you're trying to fit yourself into that and it's really not working square peg round hole all that, then right now is the day of salvation. If you hear his voice in the words of Verse 8, do not push that away. Do not explain it away. Do not believe the lie that there's something better, there's something more satisfying, there's something that's really going to fulfill you more than Jesus. There is nothing.

You must be born again. You have to be. It is not something you can take or leave. It's all or nothing. There is nothing better, so do not harden your heart. Ask the Lord to give you a new heart. Ask him, say, "Father, send your Spirit to give me new life. Give me the new birth. Make me your child. Give your heart, give your life to Jesus." I urge you today, come to him and you will find rest. Call on the name of the Lord, confess with your mouth that he is Lord, believe in your heart that he died and rose again, and you will be saved. And then when you are, as you reflect on what we've learned in this text over the past couple weeks, you will realize, "wait a minute, my trust in Christ was a gift from him. The ability to trust in Christ was a gift from him because the Spirit blew into my life and gave me the new birth." And when you realize that more and more, like I said earlier, you grow downward. You grow downward in humility, you grow downward in gratitude, and as you grow down in humility and down in gratitude, you know what happens? You look up in worship. And we're going to do that now. Before we do that though, let's pray.

Father, this truth, these truths, are powerful. These truths raise the dead to life. These truths do the greatest miracle short of raising Jesus from the dead, when you raise dead sinners to spiritual life, to eternal life. For many of us who are here watching online, it is, this is a moment of deep gratitude and significant humility. Because you deserve all the worship for this. If we did any part of this, some of the worship should come to us because we made the right choice or we did the right thing. But from beginning to end, this whole thing is about you. Which means that you deserve all of the worship for our salvation because we contributed nothing to it and you gave us all of it. And for those who are hearing these things and maybe it doesn't make sense, that could be my fault. That could be my lack of clarity or it could be because in the words of 1 Corinthians 2:14 the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, they're foolishness to him and he's not able because they're spiritually appraised and the person doesn't have the Spirit to appraise them. Either way, you know all of our hearts, and so my prayer is that you will give

every one of our hearts exactly what we need as a result of our time here together for the glory of your name. Amen.