

Understanding How People Are Saved – Regeneration, Part 2

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Titus 3:5-6

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Good morning, good evening, wherever you are, however you're watching. Thank you so much for joining me on Redeemer Live. Wasn't that music wonderful? We have an incredible team of musicians, don't we? So grateful for them as I know you are too, and so grateful for our tech team. You can't see them, but they're here right now, and it would be so great if you would go onto, whether you're watching on YouTube or Facebook, if you would go onto a comment and thank our musicians and thank our tech team. They are working tirelessly to get these things out to you, and so want to make sure that you show them how appreciative you are. Also, if you're watching our ASL broadcast, first, thank you for doing that, and second, please let Camille know how much you love and appreciate her too, okay? And while I'm thanking people, my goodness can't forget Mom, can we? Listen, if you're there with your mom right now, just look at her and say thank you, love her, let her know how grateful you are for her. If she's not there now, send her a text.

I give you permission, just press pause, send her a text, let her know. Moms, we love you, we wouldn't be here without you, but we are so grateful to you, for you, on your special day. One last thing, please don't forget to post a picture of yourselves with the hashtag #RedeemerAZLive. The longer this goes on, the better it is to see all of you. So please do that, #RedeemerAZLive. Now grab your Bibles and open to Titus 3, that's page 1100 in the Bibles we give away here, Titus 3, and when you're there, drop down to verse 4. We're going to read what is one sentence, verses 4 all the way through verse 7 is one sentence in Greek. And as we do that, if you are able, please stand as we read God's words together. I know we're in our living rooms, but who cares. Regardless of where we are, these are still God's words. So kiddos, you too. Go ahead with your parents, stand for the reading of God's Word.

Titus 3, starting in verse 4, "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us richly, through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." That is God's words. You may be seated, and as you are, join me in prayer. Father, we need to know this text, we need to know it well. This was the motivation that Paul used to encourage Titus to encourage the Christians on the island of Crete to live lives in devotion to you. It was these truths, these fundamental truths about salvation that would motivate them, that would push them to live for you and to love you and to serve you with their lives. Well, God, we need that just like they do.

And so I pray that you would use this text in our lives, that you would open the meaning of this text to us so we can understand it, so we could live in light of you, so that we could worship you

and praise you, for your goodness and your grace to us. And Father, I pray the same thing for First Baptist of Tempe, I pray for Dr. Roger Ball, I pray that you would bless him and his team as they are seeking to shepherd the people of First Baptist Tempe during this crisis. Help them, give them ideas, bless the preaching, do everything necessary in order to let them know, to let the flock of that church know how much their shepherds love them and care about them during this time. Bless their teaching this weekend and bless ours now I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, many of you watching have had children and everyone watching was born, obviously. The birth of my son, our first child, which happened seven years ago this past week, was one of the most incredible moments of my life, changed my life forever. In that moment, I didn't know I could love somebody so much that I just met one second earlier, but it happened. Love just flooded my soul in that moment. It was incredible and I'll never forget it. We've all had the experience of being born, obviously, and some of us have even given birth, and both of those experiences will help us as we return to our texts today about God's teaching on the new birth or regeneration. Our text is exclusively about this idea in verses 5 and 6 where it says, "He saved us," verse 5, "by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." Regeneration is one word in our text, but it's the idea that this text is about we're saved by the work of regeneration on our souls by the Holy Spirit.

You can see it in the text, regeneration is not salvation, regeneration is how salvation comes to a person. This verse is describing one event. The washing, regeneration and renewal, they're all the same event, they're all the same thing. And I said last week that regeneration is one of the most important truths that you and I need to know, period. We need to know this truth well, and yet there is so much confusion about this truth. That's because most people will not answer the question; how is a person saved with a reference to regeneration? They'll look at their good works, they'll elevate one good work like baptism, or they'll say something, "Well, faith in Jesus, that's how I'm saved." And that's true, but the answer of faith begs a prior question; where does the ability to believe come from? This is what I want us to think about today. So I want you to know the how of salvation. How do we experience salvation? How does God save a person? How is it that God saves people now that Jesus has risen from the dead? That's Titus 3:5-6.

To understand this text, to understand this teaching, I had seven questions, and last week I got through four of them. And so today, we're going to review the first four answers and then we're going to dig in and finish questions five through seven. I hope that salvation by God's grace, which is the big idea verses 4 to 7, I hope that God's grace will be richer and more amazing to you, I hope that that God's grace will explode on your hearts, I hope that God will get a lot bigger in your mind as we look at Titus 3:5-6. The first question we looked at last week was what is regeneration? What is regeneration? Last week I said regeneration is an internal supernatural act of God's kindness, His compassion, His mercy, where He purifies a sinner from sin's complete infection, and gives the sinner spiritual life, recreating him completely anew

spiritually. It is described in the Bible as recreation, a resurrection. It's described as a circumcision of the heart, a washing and a rebirth.

In Acts 16, it's God opening a person's heart so that she can heed, so that she can believe, and then act on the truth that she was hearing. In John 3, regeneration is pictured as a seed. I'm sorry, in 1 John 3, regeneration is pictured as a seed. It's the spark of God's life implanted in the soul, which life then grows and takes over the Christian. Regeneration happens to the soul. That's what the Bible calls our hearts, our mission control center where everything we think and feel and want and do, where all of that comes from, where all of those things originate. In regeneration, sinners are given a new heart. Our souls, they stay souls, they don't change. A Spirit isn't added to our souls, our souls are our Spirits. But in regeneration, the souls disposition. Its direction, its tastes, its tendencies when it comes to God, those change, those things change from being bent on self and rebellion to bent towards God who becomes our supreme love and our supreme satisfaction.

Anyone who's experienced this knows that while being the same on the outside, they're completely different person on the inside. The second question we looked at was this. Why is there regeneration? Why is this needed? We see the reason for regeneration in Titus 3:5 in the word washing. Regeneration cleans a person from all their sins. A washing is necessary because of sin's complete infection of the sinner. It's needed, in other words, because of what every one of us is apart from regeneration. Sin has infected every human completely. Without regeneration, our minds are blinded so we can't understand the truth and be saved. Our wills are prone to evil, not to do good, not to want good. Our emotions resist love for truth so is to be saved. Our bodies are slaves to passions and pleasures, not slaves to God to do what He says. Jesus calls us sick, He said that we live in darkness, we're slaves to sin, we're also blinded by Satan and call to his slaves who do his will.

Jesus called us evil, showing why we need to be washed. No wonder when you put all of that together, Colossians 2:13 says, "You were dead in your trespasses." Ephesians 2:1, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked," and Ephesians 2:5, "We were dead in our trespasses." Dead is not how we felt, dead is what we were. Oh, we have Spirits, that's what animates our bodies, we have souls, but we had no spiritual life. We look like we had life, but internally, spiritually, we were dead. We were dead to God, dead to Christ, dead to the work of the Spirit, dead to the things of God and His truth. And His truth had no effect, no impact on us. How much impact does anything have on a corpse? None. Food does no good to a body unless that body is what? Unless it's alive. We might know the truth, we might feel conviction, but that's not evidence of spiritual life. For the sinner to do what God wants, he must want to do it.

But he is a slave to sin, blind to the truth, hostile in mind and hard in his heart. Spiritual death is why Jesus said John 3:3 and John 3:5 people, "Cannot see," and, "cannot enter the Kingdom of God." It's why he said in John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." And it's why God said through Paul 1 Corinthians 2:14, "The natural person does

not accept the things of the Spirit of God." He is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Left to themselves, sinners have no ability to come to Christ. They don't have any ability to embrace the truth of the gospel, they don't have the ability to enter the Kingdom and be saved. They may know the facts, they may know the facts are true, they may even feel conviction, but the truth makes no real impact on them. They may hear the truth, it may affect them, but they won't embrace it, they ignore it, they reject it, they explain it. Why do we need regeneration? Because we are dead in our sins.

Third, who experiences regeneration? Who experiences regeneration? The answer is those who are saved, those who in Titus 3:4 and 3:6, those who have both God the Father and Jesus Christ as their Savior. After regeneration, Christians, they have physical life and they have spiritual life. The life of God now resides in the heart and the soul of a person that the nanosecond before did not have life in them at all. This is the inner washing, the recreating of the fallen nature. Regeneration is the reversal of total depravity. Since complete infection of everything that we are is washed, it's purified, it's recreated, regeneration opens our spiritual lives, it gives us the ability to think and understand the truth, to feel in line with the truth, to want what God wants supremely, more than anything else, and to freely choose to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him with our lives. So only saved people, only followers of Jesus are regenerated.

The fourth question is who does the regenerating? Who does the regenerating? Who accomplishes regeneration? Who is it that actually makes the follower of Jesus a new creation? Look back at Titus 3:5. It says that by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. John 6:63, Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh is no help at all. The flesh, the unsaved, rebellious per people cannot give themselves life. Now, there are handfuls of verses, Ephesians 2, James 1, 1 Peter 1, that say it's the Father who regenerates sinners. However, this work is primarily attributed to the Holy Spirit in the Bible, but all that means is this; both the Father and the Spirit are agents of regeneration. Together they accomplish regeneration on the soul of the sinner. And this is the consistent teaching of the Bible. I showed you the Spirit's work in Ezekiel 36 last week, and then we ended our time together in John 3. John 3 is where I want to start us today.

So keep your finger in Titus 3 and turn to John 3, John 3. That is page 983 in those blue Bibles, John 3. This passage is so critical for us us to understand that I want to look at it again, and this time I want to dig down even deeper than last time. Let's watch Jesus connect the work of the Spirit to regeneration starting in verse 1. Now, there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Did you see that in verse 3? You must be born again. That is not a command, that is a statement of fact.

A man who had only known entering the Kingdom, only known being saved because of his race and because of his good works, Jesus destroys the entire system with one sentence, saying, "To

be saved, to enter the Kingdom, you must be born again." Salvation, in other words, is something that happens to you, Nicodemus, it's not something that you do, it doesn't come from you. You can't do anything for this. In other words, Jesus is saying, "We didn't choose to be physically alive and nobody chooses to be spiritually alive." This is John 1:13. Regeneration is not the result of our will, our choice. This is what Jesus is getting at when He says, verse 3, Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" I don't think Nicodemus is confused when he asked Jesus this question, he knew exactly what Jesus is saying.

He understands that Jesus is saying this second birth is impossible, which would mean it is impossible, Nicodemus is realizing this, it is impossible for him to enter the Kingdom. Being born is an absolutely obvious analogy to the idea that nothing the sinner does precedes regeneration. The infant does nothing. Birth happens to the infant, the second birth happens to the sinner. An infant contributes nothing to his birth, sinners contribute nothing to their second birth. Jesus didn't answer his question with a how-to course on how to be born again, that's because there are no steps to being born again. There's no how-to manual just like there's no how-to manual that infants read before they're born. He or she, infant, is just along for the ride, so to speak, completely passive, and then they're born. And like birth, the Spirit gives spiritual life to the soul of a sinner only once. You're not born and then born and then born and then born physically. You're born once physically and you are born once spiritually. You are not born again and then again and again and again and again.

A baby comes from the realm of darkness, enters the realm of light, and then all her faculties instantly kick in, breathing, seeing, smelling, hearing, all those things. In a similar way, we come from the realm of spiritual darkness and as soon as we're born again, all our faculties kick in. Intellectually, the truth we hated, we now want more of. What we resisted we now embrace. What we thought before, we now reject. Emotionally, the disgust that we felt for God and the love that we have for sin is replaced with love for God and hatred for sin. Our desires change from wanting rebellion and rejecting righteousness to wanting righteousness and rejecting rebellion. All Christians know what I'm talking about. Look at how Jesus answers this question about being born again, verse 5, Jesus answered, "Truly, truly I say to you," notice there's no how-to, He just restates what He said, "I say to you, unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. The water refers to the washing of Titus 3:5, it's the spiritual cleansing that we saw last week in Ezekiel 36.

And notice the regeneration. Notice it is being born of the Spirit, born by the Spirit of God. This is what must happen in order for a person to enter the Kingdom to be saved. Verse 6, "That which is born of flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." All flesh can produce is more flesh. You can't get the Spirit, you can't get life from your flesh. You can't get life, spiritual life, using your flesh. You can't give yourself life. Sin, rebellion, a proclivity, a bent against God, cannot be fixed by sinners. Human effort contributes nothing to this. Regeneration is

supernatural. Notice, it is born of the Spirit, it is the Spirit who must give birth to you. In context here, whatever a person has accomplished religiously, morally, doesn't make them fit for salvation. To the teacher in Israel, Jesus said even he must be born again, the very top of the religious system in Israel at the time, even he had to be born again.

This would completely stun anyone who's trying to earn their salvation like Nicodemus was and Jesus knew it. Look at verse 7, "Do not marvel that I said to you you must be born again." This shouldn't shock you. Notice, this is not a command. Like I said, this is a statement of fact. And as before, it happens to you. You don't cooperate with regeneration, you just receive it. And who does that work? Jesus tells us again in verse 8, who the regenerator is. Verse 8, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sounds, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes, so it is with everyone who was born of the Spirit." There's that phrase again. Here is a final analogy that like birth takes salvation completely out of the hand of sinners and places it squarely in the gracious hands of God. Jesus compares the work of the Spirit in regeneration to wind. And again, the analogy is so easy to follow. It's amazing that this is missed. We've all experienced wind. Well, let's think through Jesus comparing wind to the Spirit's work of regeneration.

Last time I had five points for verse 8, I thought about this more, and so today I actually have six points of comparison between wind and the Spirit's work of regeneration. First, like the wind, the Spirit is invisible. You can only see the effect of the Spirit, you cannot actually see the Spirit. Second, like the wind blowing, the Spirit is active. But think about it, just as there's no set pattern to the wind blowing, so there's no set pattern to the work of the Spirit in regeneration. You cannot set up rules and regulations for how and when and who He regenerates, there are not prerequisites for regenerations, you must do this and then you're regenerated. None of that is there. This invisible force, third, this invisible force of the wind has an effect on physical objects, just as the third person of the Trinity who is not a force but who is a person, He actively but invisibly works on the soul, but it's His regenerating effect on the soul, while happening invisibly, is seen physically. How? In the changed life of the sinner after regeneration.

The moment passes without us even being conscious of it, but we're conscious of the effect of regeneration because everything changes, just like the fourth, just like the wind blows where it wishes, so the Spirit does as he wishes in regeneration. Just as no one can control the wind, so no one can control the Spirit in birthing people again. You can't ask for the wind to come, you can't command it, you can't tell it to leave, you can't increase the wind, you can't decrease the wind. It doesn't show up, it doesn't leave when you want it to, it is uncontrollable, it's unpredictable, and so is the Spirit. He is in complete control of regeneration. Sinners do not and cannot get Him to come, they do not and cannot get Him to go. He gives spiritual life however and whenever and to whoever He wants, which is the point to this Pharisee. It's not based on your work, so you're not earning your prerequisite so that you can be saved. That's not happening. Fifth, the wind cannot be resisted. When it's blowing, you just have to deal with it until it's over.

So the Spirit being God has the attribute of omnipotence, meaning when His work begins, it cannot not be accomplished. His power, in other words, in regeneration, is irresistible. And sixth,

like the wind that you can hear, but to quote verse 8, "You don't know quote where it comes from or where it goes." So it is with everyone who's born of the Spirit, there is an unpredictable mystery about regeneration. We don't exactly understand how this happens or exactly what God does to actually give new life, we just know that from the scriptures He does, and He does that by the Spirit. So in both analogies, birth and wind, we are not in control. We did not choose regeneration. And this, I think, is if you're watching right now and you have a problem with what I'm saying, I think this gets to the very core of why, you want to have some control over your salvation. You cannot fathom the idea that you are purely at the mercy of God to save you.

But this is the outwork of the idea that we've been seeing for weeks now in Titus 3, He saves because He is kind, He saves because He is compassionate, He saves because He is merciful and He saves because He is gracious, just like birth. Well, let me put it this way. How much control, how much say, how choice did you have on your first birth? None. Just like your mom, the Holy Spirit did it all. How much control, how much say, how choice do we have with the wind? Again, none. You were passive, you had no control, you did nothing to birth yourself the first time, and if you're born again, you did nothing to birth yourself the second time either. That should cause you to pause right now and be amazed that the God of the universe would be merciful to you, that he would look on you, one, according to Titus 3:3, who is in rebellion against Him, hating Him, hating others. "When you were dead in your sins," it says, "and He made you alive and He gave you life."

Now, after that review, the fifth question we want the Bible to answer is this; how does regeneration happen? How does regeneration happen? And with this, we can only lightly touch the edges of the mystery that Jesus just talked about in John 3. Turn back to Titus 3. How regeneration, in the actual moment, how that happens is mysterious. Like I said, does the Spirit touch our spirits? What happens there? First, this much we can say, the Holy Spirit is poured out in regeneration by the Father through Jesus. Look at verse 5 again, "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom," that's the Spirit, "whom He poured out," He goes all the way back to verse 4, "God our Savior, God the Father, "whom He, whom the Father poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." The Trinity, in other words, is involved in regeneration. This is yet another act of God's mercy, when He appeared to us personally and saved us.

So the washing, the regenerating, the renewing and the outpouring are describing the same event. This is how a person is saved, this says how salvation comes to a sinner and all of that happened, verse 6, through Jesus Christ our Savior. So the Father gives the Spirit to Jesus, who gives Him to the people that he saves. Acts 2:33 says, "Jesus poured the Spirit out on the day of Pentecost," and Titus 3:5-6 describe a kind of continuation of that outpouring that happens every time a person is born again. Every time a person is regenerated and then they're saved, Jesus pours the Spirit out on them to regenerate them. And as evidence of Jesus' deity in this text, not only is Jesus combined with the Father in the work of salvation, not only does He share the same title Savior as the Father has in verse 4, but think about it, Jesus is seen here as fulfilling the I will

promises of Ezekiel 36, which were things that Ezekiel said, Yahweh, the Lord, those were things that he promised to do, Jesus here fulfills them. Why? Because He is Yahweh, He is the Lord.

And notice the text, God's mercy, in the fact that He is seen in the fact that He gives copious amounts of the Spirit in regeneration, richly, generously, abundantly supplied. In other words, He meets all our needs for spiritual life. He does everything we need to be born again. In context, once again, good works are useless to do this. There's no lack because the Spirit is given richly, all mercy, all grace, all salvation, all regeneration, all of the Spirit, it all comes through Jesus. That's why He's the Savior. All the blessings that come with salvation come from the Father through Him. He's the only mediator between God and us, which is why He alone is the Savior. Now, second, in the Bible, regeneration is also said to happen by the Word of God. Listen to James 1:18, God, "Brought us forth by the word of truth." 1 Peter 1:23 says, Christians, "Have been born again through the living and abiding Word of God." Now, verse 25 says is the Word that is preached to people.

So regeneration happens when the Father gives the Spirit to Jesus, who pours Him out on people who are reading or hearing the Word of God. And this is consistent with other parts of the Bible. When God created life, how did He do it? He spoke. When Jesus created limbs and created eyes, how did He do it? He spoke. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He spoke, and in the speaking He gave Lazarus life. Lazarus is an illustration of regeneration. This is how regeneration is described in 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,'" has shown in our hearts that's regeneration, "has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." This means regeneration does not happen at water baptism, there is no such thing as baptismal regeneration. The act of baptism does not give anybody new life and never has. Titus 3:5 does not teach this, and I want to quickly give you seven reasons why.

And you might be thinking, "Oh man, six reasons, seven reasons." Listen, I'm doing this because many of you watching came out of a religious system that told you you must be baptized in order to be saved, or I'm doing this because you need to give this to somebody that you know who believes they need to be baptized to be saved. They do not. And I want you to see this first, chapter 3:5, the word washing can refer to the place where someone washes like a bathtub, but it is never used that way in the New Testament. Second, nowhere in the New Testament, including Titus 3:5-6, is baptism seen as the way people are regenerated. We saw it in John 3:5, 3:8, we see it here. It's always the Spirit who regenerates, not baptism. That that would completely contradict what Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3, would've just said, "Oh, well how does this happen?" "Well, just go get baptized." He didn't say that, even in John 3:5.

Third, Simon the magician, in Acts 8, was part of a group of people, it says, that were baptized, but it also says his heart was not right before the Lord. He was told to repent so that he would be forgiven, that which clearly shows he wasn't regenerated because in order to be right with God and forgiven you must be regenerated. Fourth, regeneration by baptism contradicts the absolutely

plain words that come right before the subject of regeneration, in Titus 3:5, "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness." Even the best works, a work like baptism, a work like baptism done in righteousness does not, cannot, save anyone. Fifth, the word wash in verse 5 is never clearly used in the New Testament for baptism. Sixth, notice the end of verse 5. It is the Spirit that does the regenerating. Notice, the text not say the washing does the regenerating. Washed is a result of the Spirit's work, washed is not what causes regeneration. That is critical, number seven.

So what is baptism then? Baptism is a picture. It is a symbol, it is a celebration of what happens when the Spirit regenerates a person. Their old life dies, their old life is washed away and they are raised to new life. Baptism celebrates this, baptism does not cause this. So regeneration happens through Jesus and through the preaching of His Word. It does not happen through baptism or any other deed done in righteousness. Sixth, when does regeneration happen? When does regeneration happen? For this, I just need to say two things. First, regeneration is not a process. Nowhere is regeneration seem seen as complete or in process. Like birth, the new birth is instantaneous. One moment you were not born, the next moment you were. One moment, you were spiritually dead, the next moment, in the twinkling of an eye, you were made alive. It is an act that happens instantaneously in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, so to speak.

Notice, 3:6, poured out is not in a continual tense, it is something that that happened. Salvation happens in a person, and at that moment, the Spirit is poured out on someone and they are regenerated. Happens in a moment, it's not a process. Second, I want you to see that regeneration happens when we are still in our sins. Yeah, turn to Ephesians 2. Ephesians 2. If you have a Bible from here, that is page 1079, Ephesians 2. What I want you to do is drop down to verse 4 and I want you to look for and listen for the time word. I'm going to start reading in verse 4. "God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us even when," I just emphasized it for you so you wouldn't miss it, "even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace, you have been saved." Notice that connection, dead made alive. Why? Because of grace.

So we are dead, we are made alive, God makes us alive. The split second before regeneration, in other words, we're dead. Now, there's an order here and notice the order keeps going, in verse 8, "For by grace you've been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God." So we're dead, we're made alive, and then we believe. The logic of Ephesians 2, faith comes after regeneration, verse 8, and verse 8 comes after verses 4 and 5. Faith is the result of regeneration, in other words, it is not the cause of regeneration. I want you to turn to 1 John 4. 1 John 4. I want you to listen for the timing word in 1 John 4, that's page 1125 in those blue Bibles. 1 John 4, drop down to verse 7. I want you to notice the timing in verse 7. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God and whoever loves, whoever is loving, has been born of God and knows God."

So the whoever loves, love is, throughout 1 John, a proof of eternal life, whoever loves has been born of God. So being born of God precedes being a loving person. Being a loving person, in

other words, is a result, John is saying, of regeneration. This timing is clear in 1 John 5:1. Notice what it says, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." It says, "Everyone who is currently believing in Jesus has previously been born again." Well, how far back does that go? Why can't that be true the moment a person starts believing? In that moment, do they believe in Jesus? If yes, if so, why does 5:1 say they're believing in Jesus? What does it say? It says that they are believing in Jesus even in that first moment. Why is that there according to John? Answer; because they'd already been reborn. There is a cause-and-effect thing going on here. Regeneration is the cause, faith is the effect. We saw in 4:7, regeneration is the cause, love is the effect.

Or let me come at it from a different angle by asking you, what can a dead man do? I mean, other than stink, what can a dead man actually do? Anything? No, no. It seems regeneration must happen before believing in Jesus. To do something spiritual, like responding to the preaching of God's Word With faith in Jesus for salvation, you must be alive spiritually to do that. To do something, a person must first exist. In other words, spiritual life must exist in the soul before a person can choose to do something spiritual like believe. You'd have to already be regenerated, you'd have to already be born again before you believe, and this makes sense because dead people don't do anything. That is why Ephesians 2:8 calls faith a gift from God, that is why Philippians 1:29 says, Faith is something God grants us, that is why Acts 11:18 and 2 Timothy 2:25 both say God grants repentance. That is the flip side of faith.

Without that, without God graciously gifting, granting repentance in faith, we have no ability to understand the truth, grasp the truth, embrace the truth, and respond with repentance in faith. Without regeneration, there is no repentance and there is no faith. To say repentance and faith are gifts is to imply that God, by His Spirit, has enabled the ability to repent and believe first. Before that, John 6:44 says, "We cannot come to Christ," but now we can. Before, 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "We cannot understand the truth," but now we can. Before John 3:3, John 3:5, both say, "We cannot enter the Kingdom," but now we can. The sinner, all the sinners, the Holy Spirit regenerates believe, and those who believe have already been regenerated. How does this happen and when and where and all that? Again, that's where we touch the edge of the mystery, the wind just blows. But what can we say? We can say this; we were dead, we were made alive and we believe. And let me emphasize that, we believe, the Spirit doesn't believe for us.

He makes us alive and then we choose to repent. He gives us the new birth and then we choose to believe. We do so willingly, we do so happily. We're not forced to do it, we want to do it with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We want nothing more than to believe in Christ after we've been regenerated. All the scales have fallen off and we see how wonderful the Savior is. Using theological words, in regeneration we're passive, but in conversion we're active. We are active in conversion, meaning we repent, we believe, because previous to that, in the twinkling of an eye, we were born again. Conversion follows instantly and unstoppably after regeneration.

Conversion is our first act after regeneration. We repent and we believe because sin's infection of our chooser, our will, sin's infection has been washed, giving us the ability to choose Christ,

where before we wouldn't even want to, we would never do it, we could not ever do it, Jesus said, over and over again. But now we want to because we're alive. Salvation in Titus 3:5 is not regeneration. Salvation, listen, is the result of regeneration.

Regeneration is how a person experiences salvation. Regeneration does not happen after salvation, it happens just before. We believe and then we're given eternal life. So here's how it goes; regeneration, believe, eternal life. We don't get eternal life from regeneration, we believe and then we're saved. Then we're united to Christ, then our sins are forgiven, then the Spirit indwells us. The indwelling of the Spirit is not regeneration either. We're adopted, reconciled, redeemed, justified, and God's wrath is quelled against us when we believe. But how do we believe? Because we're born again. All that happens after we believe. But where does the ability to believe come from? Answer; it comes from the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The seed of God's life, of spiritual life, is planted in our souls. We don't don't give it the spark of life, we don't make the seed start growing. New life isn't planted because the sinner perceives the truth, he perceives the truth, he repents and believes, because the seed of new life was planted in his soul already.

Lazarus didn't choose to come to life, he came to life and then started making choices. The first being coming out of the tomb in obedience to Jesus' command. The Holy Spirit regenerates and then we respond by cultivating the growth when we believe, and then we continue to respond to that growth in sanctification. This, as we saw in Ephesians 2, and as we've been seeing in the context of Titus 3:5, all of that happens because God is kind, compassionate, merciful and gracious to sinners. We don't earn it, we merely receive the gifts. Now, the seventh and final question I'm going to ask, and we're going to look to the Bible to answer, is this; why does regeneration matter? Why does regeneration matter? You should still be in 1 John. So points one to six were my introduction, point seven is my sermon. You should only have one question after all of that, has the new birth happened to me? That's it.

And I want to help you with that. You're still in 1st John, turn to 1st John 2. 1st John 2. 1st John gives the evidence that someone has been born again, and he makes this clear. The idea is if you've been given a new spiritual life, then you will live a new life. In other words, the washing, the regenerating, the renewing work of the Spirit starts at regeneration. It will impact your life and change your life, making you more and more like Jesus and less and less like the old you that you were washed away from. There will be an old you because there's a new you living unlike the old you used to live before. Verse 29, "If you know that He is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practiced righteousness has been born of Him." So living a life that pleases God, doing what's right by Him, that is evidence. What does it say? That you've been born again.

Look at 3:9, same idea. "No one born of God," there's that idea, regeneration, "no one born of God makes a practice of sinning." Why? Notice that word for, now He's going to say the reason, now He's going to say the cause. Why don't they make a practice of sinning? For because God's seed abides in him. And he cannot keep on sinning. Why? Because he has been already born of God. Here it is again, the effect is not continuing in sin, the cause is regeneration. The seed of God's life is in the Christian. When the Spirit gives new life, that life begins to be holy,

separated, devoted to God, not self and not our culture. Next, being born again, being regenerated, impacts how we treat people. We saw this in 4:7. Let's look again, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God." Here, proof that you've been born again is love. The cause is being born again, the effect of being born again is love for others.

And the same is true for loving God, which means doing what He says. 5:1 again, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him." So there's obedience and love there, there's belief all together in one place. Verse 2, "By this, we know that we love the children of God. When we love God and obeys commandments, for this is the love of God that we keep His commandments. His commandments are not burdensome for everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world, overcomes the temptations, overcomes the false teachings, and this is the victory that is overcome the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" So your belief is tied to being born again, love is tied to being born again, obedience is tied to being born again. All of it. All of it is tied to being born again.

Regeneration happens and the evidence of that comes out in belief, obedience and love. One more passage, look at chapter 5:18. "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him and the evil one does not touch him." Think about it. There is a third analogy here, there is a parallel here between the virgin birth and the new birth. What happened in Mary by the Holy Spirit physically is what happens to everybody who experiences the new birth spiritually. The virgin-born Jesus, that's he who was born of God protects him, that is Jesus. He was born of God when He was born to Mary and Joseph. And it says here that Jesus protects those who are regenerated, keeping them in the family. He protects them, He preserves them. You can be born spiritually just as easily as you can be unborn physically. Think about that. You can be unborn spiritually just as easily as you can be unborn physically. No believer can ever stop believing.

Noah may have fallen down many times in the ark, but Noah never fell out of the ark. So a change in what a person believes about Jesus, a change in how they treat people, a change in how they live their lives, all three give the proof that a person is born again and they can never be unborn again. Does that explain the son or daughter of yours who once prayed a prayer, came forward in a meeting or went to church with you a bunch, but now is living like the devil? Can you stop saying they're saved and backslidden? If they live like the devil, they're still a child of the devil, and they need your prayers and they need you to give them the gospel. They don't need you to act like they're Christians when it is abundantly clear that they are not born again. The more important question now though is not someone else, but the most important question is this; are you born again? Has the Holy Spirit regenerated you?

Has your salvation become more and more sure the more I've explained Titus 3:5-6, and the biblical idea of regeneration that is found there? Is it becoming more sure? Has it been becoming

more sure in your heart or less? Have you been questioning your salvation, especially after walking through the proofs of regeneration in 1 John? Were you dead to God, His Son, His Spirit, His truth, but now you're alive? Are you a new creation? Do you know that? Have you experienced that? Is there a clearly BC you and AC, after Christ, you? If not, listen, two things. If answering those questions, diagnosing you with those questions, if that has caused you to be concerned about your salvation; two things. Number one, stay under the teaching of God's Word. Read it, listen to it, memorize it. When you feel conviction, lean into that. Roman's 10:17, "Faith comes from hearing the word," so stay in the Bible, and second, like I said last week, pray.

Ask God for the wind of the Spirit to blow on you. Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Cry out to Him for salvation, a humble and contrite heart, He will not reject, Psalm 51:17. And I remember coming out of the closet as a Christian to a friend of mine, who responded by saying, "You're not one of those born agains, are you?" Well, from everything we've seen, this week and last week, it's clear, right? There is no Christian who's not born again. No one is saved, no one will enter the Kingdom, no one will be saved without the life of God in their soul, through the Spirit by regeneration. This is no small matter, by the way, so let's just hear Jesus one more time in John 3. After everything we've spent the past two Sundays, the past two weeks on, He would be surprised if you didn't understand the implications of regeneration. John 3:7, "Do not marvel that I said to you you must be born again." Do you see it now? You must be born again. It is not an option.

It is necessary, it is essential. There is no salvation without it. This is not hard to understand. He made it clear, John 3:3, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." John 3:5, "Unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." You must be washed from all of your sins, you must be born again by the Spirit. Are you? Are you? Listen, those words are Jesus' words, not mine, you must be born again. You must be born again or you are still dead in your sins. Your good works do not make you able to believe, your religious rituals don't make you able to come to Christ. Your prayers, your service, your giving, none of that impresses God enough to give you life. That is Jesus' message to Nicodemus, and that is His message to us. I wonder is that His message to you? You must be born again. You must be born again or you are still dead in your sins.

You must be born again or you have not been washed, you've not been purified, forgiven, cleansed from the presence and the guilt of all your sins. You must be born again or you are still part of the old creation, the creation that is under God's judgment and is awaiting the sentence of everlasting death. You must be born again or you have not experienced the Holy Spirit. You may have experienced some Spirit, but you have never experienced the Holy Spirit unless you're born again. You must be born again or you are not saved, you must be born again or you have not experienced the grace of God, you must be born again or you have not experienced the mercy of God, you must be born again or you have not experienced the goodness, the kindness and compassion of God either. You must be born again or Jesus is not your Savior, you must be born

again or you have not been justified, you are not acceptable to God, you must be born again or you will not inherit eternal life.

You must, you must, you must be born again. You must be, you have to be. There is not even a shred of hope, of salvation, without it. You must be born again. Let's pray. Father, it's at this point when my prayer is typically meant to summarize what I just said, and try to drive it home through our hearts. But there is nothing more important to say than sinners must be born again. Father, do the work of regeneration by your grace, for your glory that only you can do, in the hearts of every single person who is watching that needs it. And for those who have already experienced regeneration, give us a greater amazement at your absolute boundless kindness and grace towards us who believe. Thank you. We will spend endless ages simply saying thank you for your grace and regeneration because everything else followed from that. Thank you. Pray these things for the glory of your name. Amen.