

John 3:1-15 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 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?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 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.” 9 Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” 10 Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Intro

Last Sunday we saw that the New Birth is a very humbling teaching from Scripture because you and I have no control over it. In the same way that a baby can't cause itself to be born, the New Birth is not something that we can make happen. This is something that God has to do in us before we can see Jesus or trust in him.

Remember how when Nicodemus asked, “How could this be?” And Jesus said, “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 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.”

Do you see what Jesus is saying? We don't control the New Birth. We can only see the evidence of it.

This morning I want to do two things. I want to look a little closer at Nicodemus and I want to look at the true evidence of the New Birth.

1. Everyone needs the New Birth
2. Evidence of the New Birth

1. Everyone needs the New Birth

When I say that Regeneration is something everyone needs, here's what I mean. A person might think that this radical transformation is only something that people who are really messed up need.

I'm here to tell you, it doesn't matter how good you are, it doesn't matter how bad you are, we all equally need the New Birth. Case in point - Nicodemus. In the eyes of his generation and culture, Nicodemus was a model citizen. He was a Pharisee. We have come to think of the Pharisees in a very negative light. And, there was a lot of corruption and hypocrisy within this elite class of men. There was a pretense, a form of religion,

but for many of them it was an empty shell, that looked nice on the outside but in reality was full of dead men's bones.

From the standpoint of their culture, Pharisees were the most highly revered and respected men of their day. They went to worship every week. They didn't just tithe their money... If they had a spice garden, they even gave tithes of that. From an outward perspective, they were very obedient to the Old Testament. They probably made for very good neighbors.

Nicodemus seems to have been a genuinely good man. He was possibly the greatest theologian and Bible teacher of his day. Jesus called him, "The teacher of Israel." There's no hint in the NT that he was corrupt. In fact, later on we're going to see him stand against the corruption of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the court system of Israel. Even when Nicodemus came to Jesus, he had a very high opinion of him. He said, "We know that you are a teacher come from God..."

But, despite what a good man he was, despite all of his knowledge of the Bible, despite his respected status in his community, even his good opinion of Jesus... Jesus looked this man in the eyes and said... You must be born again!

Do you realize what this means? No matter how good you are? No matter how well you have kept the rules. Even if you have quite a bit of biblical knowledge and think that Jesus was a great man... None of that is good enough. No matter how outwardly good you are, no matter how moral... We all need the New Birth.

Why is that? Because the teaching of Scripture is that all of us are separated from God by sin. In fact, the necessity of the New Birth lies in the fact that we are dead in our trespasses and sins. That doesn't mean that we can't do good things. And in one sense that doesn't mean that there aren't good people in the world. What it means is that our goodness can't be good enough for God's standards.

Look at what Jesus told Nicodemus at the end of our passage. Jesus draws on a biblical example from Numbers 18 when the children of Israel were with Moses. Because of their sin and complaining against God, God sent a plague of fiery serpents that bit the people. And the only way they could be saved was God gave Moses instructions to form a serpent out of brass and lift it up high on a pole. And every person who came out to see the brazen serpent was saved and lived.

I find this so shocking that Jesus used this as a metaphor for himself. In John 3:14 Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

What in the world was Jesus saying? I mean, in the OT, the serpent was a representation of sin... That's how sin came into the world... The serpent tempted Eve to eat the fruit.

What was Jesus saying to Nicodemus? Even a man as good as him needed to see his own sins high and lifted up on a pole before he could be saved. That's why Jesus went to the cross. And that's why Jesus used this metaphor to describe his suffering on the cross.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

That's the spiritual reality that we need to see and believe in order to be saved. And that's what makes the New Birth so critical... Like Nicodemus, no matter how good we may be, before we can see spiritual reality, we must first be born again.

That's #1 The Necessity of the New Birth. Let's look at #

2. The evidence of the New Birth

How can you know that you have been born again? How can you know that you have, not just a good opinion of Jesus, but genuine saving faith in him? Well, we need to look at the evidence.

Evidence is information or facts that show whether or not something is true. Our degree of trust depends on the quality of the evidence.

Usually when a person buys a house, they'll hire an inspector. Because they want solid reliable evidence that the house is in good shape. You don't want to take the homeowner's word for it. And you can't necessarily trust your own opinion.

With our salvation, it's the same. There's nothing more important than knowing if you are truly saved. With this, we cannot rely on our feelings, or our opinion. We need solid, dependable evidence.

Thankfully, we have been given the clear evidences of the New Birth in the Scripture. In fact, John devoted an entire letter to this very issue.

1 John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

In 1st John there are 6 realities that exist in the life of every true child of God. These are the things that naturally happen when the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us. Remember, in regeneration we are given a new heart with new affections. It's a radical transformation from the inside out. Which means, it's not merely our behavior that changes, but it's our heart.

So let me outline these 6 things. It's important to know that, If you are saved it doesn't mean that they are perfect in your life, but they must be genuinely present.

1st Evidence - Regeneration produces a new relationship to Christ.

1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God...

This is a great passage which shows us, grammatically, that regeneration precedes faith.

Genuine faith in Christ is dependence/reliance/trust in who Jesus is and what he has done on your behalf. In other words, what are you depending on for your relationship with God? Why do you believe God accepts you as his child? It can't be because of anything good in you. It's because of Christ.

There was another Pharisee, a great man, with great accomplishments who once trusted in himself, but when God dealt with his soul, he transferred his trust from himself and his goodness to Christ... In Philippians 3 Paul listed all of his personal goodness, his elite family pedigree, his accomplishments, his status as a Pharisee, he even said he was blameless in keeping the law... But when he met Christ

Philippians 3:8-9 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

2nd Evidence - A new relationship to sin.

1 John 3:6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

The New Birth means that the bonds of sin are broken in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. The new heart we've been given now longs to obey and please our Savior.

Now, does this mean that a true Christian never sins? No it does not. What it does mean is that a true Christian does not continue happily in sin without repentance. I'm really concerned for people when I hear them deal with their sin by saying, "Well, nobody's perfect.", or, "We all fall short."

If you're here this morning and you're struggling with your sin. That's a good sign. We will always struggle with remaining sin. The question is, are you struggling back against it or are you content with allowing it in your life.

3rd Evidence - A new relationship to God's commandments.

1 John 2:3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

When I hear people say, "Christianity is not a list of rules, it's a relationship." I'm like, there's a drop of truth in there but that is a completely false and misleading way to think of a relationship with Christ. I mean, in your relationship with your spouse, your children, or your parents... are there no rules? Do you really mean to say anything goes? Of course not!

To be in a relationship with God... means that he is our Father. He is our God. We owe him worship and obedience. Christ is our Savior and our king. We owe him our allegiance.

1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

God's commandments are given to us out of love for us for our good. And our obedience to his commands is the evidence that we love him.

4th Evidence - A new relationship to the world.

1 John 2:15-16 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

World here in this context does not mean creation and it does not mean all of the people in the world. The word “world” is sometimes used in the NT to represent the sphere of Satan’s rebellion against God. Worldliness is all that stands against Christ and his kingdom and his glory. You see it in government, education, the arts, media, and entertainment. It doesn’t mean that those institutions are inherently evil, but worldliness has infiltrated them and through them Satan wages war against God.

Friends, We can’t become comfortable with worldliness. We cannot make peace with things for which Christ died.

5th Evidence - A new relationship to the word of God.

1 John 4:6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

John was speaking as an Apostle who was uniquely authorized to speak the word of God on Christ’s behalf. One of the first things that needs to start happening when a baby is born is they need to start eating. No matter how old you are, if you don’t have an appetite for food that is a sign of sickness that needs to be addressed. A true child of God hungers for the word of God.

Deuteronomy 8:3 Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

Friends, a person who has no appetite for the word of God, for the preaching of it, the reading of it, the study of it, the internalizing of it, and the living of it... is either severely sick and in danger or still dead in their sins.

6th and Final Evidence - People who have been born again have a new relationship with the family of God.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.

When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, he unites us both to Christ and to the entire family of God. The new heart brings a new affection for the family of God. So we move towards community, support, and love for one another, not living isolated spiritual lives.

Conclusion

Let me close with a few tips on helping you examine yourself to see if these evidences truly exist in your life.

1. Pray that God would help you genuinely examine yourself to see whether these 6 things are present in your life.
2. It’s very difficult for us to objectively evaluate our own selves. Invite one or two of your believing family members to share their observations of you with you. Are there areas where you need growth? Are they concerned or encouraged by your faith?
3. Gather consistently with 2 or three brothers and sisters in Christ where you grant each other the freedom to speak truth into one another’s lives. If you see me falling short in some area of my Christian walk you help me identify that. And together we each help one another in our growth and walk with Christ.

Friends, God wants us to have assurance of our salvation. But he wants us to be assured on the basis of solid biblical evidence. So have *you* been born again? And is the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life?