

Regeneration (Part 2 – Evidence of the New Birth)

This week I would like to continue our theme regeneration. Jesus tells Nicodemus (and us) that if we are to see the kingdom of heaven, we must be born again. In other words, something powerful must take place in our lives as sinners, as those who are separated from God, as those who are dead in their trespasses and sins, so that we are made alive. We must be born from above by the power of God. As we saw last week, we must be made clean from sin. And, we must be given life-giving power to live and grow in godliness. As Paul reminds Timothy (and us), saying, **“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”** (Tit. 3:4-7). With this in mind, I want to try and apply the doctrine of regeneration to our lives practically. In other word, what does it look like to be born again? What does it look like in your life? And, what does it look like in the life of the church? Now, since the Apostle John uses the word “born again” to describe Christians, I want to use 1 John as our example to apply regeneration. I want to highlight 11 evidences of the new birth and make some comments toward application. (My answers come straight from the Scriptures. Some of these will certainly overlap.)

1. Those who are born of God keep his commandments. 1 John 2:3-4: **“And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him . . .”** And in 1 John 3:24: **“Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God and God in him . . .”** Here, we find obedience to the commands of Christ. Now, all God’s commands in both the NT and the OT are the commands of Christ. But, in Christ we see the fulfillment and example of what it means to be obedient. And the emphasis of Christ is not merely outward obedience but obedience from the heart.

2. Those who are born of God walk as Christ walked. 1 John 2:5-6: **“But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him; 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”** The emphasis here is on following Christ’s example in all things. As a child follows the example of his/her parents, so we follow our Lord in all his ways. Pray as he prayed. Speak as he spoke. Spend time with people, both believers and non-believers.

3. Those who are born of God do not hate others, but love them. 1 John 2:9: **“Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.”** 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.”** 1 John 4:7-8: **“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”** 1 John 4:20: **“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is**

a liar.” Those who are born of God, those who are regenerate, do not hate their brothers and sisters, not even one of them. We may not like what a brother or sister does or agree with their stance on something. But, we must love them. This is what we do!

4. Those who are born of God do not love this world. 1 John 2:15: **“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”** This morning, do you find yourself drawn to the ways of this world? Are you storing up for yourselves things that thieves come in and steal and moths eat? Do you love the things of this world, its ways, its systems, its pleasures, its treasures, more than you love Christ? Now, I think we all struggle with sin, and even may, at times, love the things of this world. But, down deep, a Christian DOES NOT continue with such love. This week, I read Philippians and let me recall the words of Paul as an example of one who loved the things of this world, but when He came to Christ, this all changed. He says, I was **“circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 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 . . .”** (Phil. 3:5-8) Is this my heart? Is this your heart? Such is the heart of the regenerate person.

5. Those who are born of God confess the Son and receive him. 1 John 2:23: **“No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.”** 1 John 4:15: **“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”** 1 John 5:12: **“Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”** Here, I think the emphasis is on the person of the Son as deity. Over and over again in the gospels we read that the reason the Jews wanted to kill Jesus was because he made himself out to be God (John 5:18). They could not say, “Jesus was the Son of God,” and as the Son, was of the same essence of the Father. But, those who are born again confess Him in this way. Is Christianity just a religion to you? Or, do you follow Jesus as God? If so, you have life!

6. Those who are born of God practice righteousness. 1 John 2:29: **“If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.”** This overlaps obedience and walking as Jesus walked. Those who are born again live godly lives. If you are regenerate, your desires are to live godly in this world. I think of Tit. 2:11-14: **“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”**

7. Those who are born of God do not make a practice of sinning. 1 John 3:6: **“No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or knows**

him.” 1 John 3:9-10: “**No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.**” 1 John 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.**” I think here, the emphasis is not that we do not sin as Christians. We do. But, because of the grace of God in regeneration, we are repentant. We cannot continue in our sin (recall my own ways when I first got saved.)

8. Those who are born of God possess the Spirit of God. 1 John 3:24: “**By this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.**” 1 John 4:13: “**By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.**” Only those who are regenerate have the Spirit. And, in the New Covenant, we have the Spirit in fullness. And the reason we do all these other things John is teaching is because of the great power of God in us! If you are a Christian, you are born again!

9. Those who are born of God listens 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.**” In this context, John is speaking about Apostolic authority and their teaching. But today, this applies to the entire word of God. If you are born again, the pinnacle of your “listening” is found in the Word of God. As the Psalmist says, the Word is like honey in your mouth. (See Ps. 19:10).

10. Those who are born of God believe that Jesus is the Christ. 1 John 5:1: “**Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.**” Here, the emphasis is on the Lordship of Jesus. If you are born again, you call Jesus Lord! And this isn’t merely lip service. It flows from your heart. You believe Jesus is the Son of God, that he came to the earth, took flesh, lived a sinless life, laid down his life on the cross, rose again, and now sits at the right hand of God as Lord! And when push comes to shove, you will not deny him.

11. Those who are born of God overcome the world. 1 John 5:4: “**Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.**” Sin, death, the devil, all the evils of this world, all the ways of sin that leads to death and destruction have been overcome through the gospel of Jesus Christ which you believe! In the same ways Jesus has overcome, so we have overcome. 1 John 5:5 says, “**Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**” 1 John 4:4 says, “**Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**”

If you were to go to court in defense of your Christianity, would there be enough evidence to prove you are a Christian? Would there be enough evidence for us as a church? Are we born again? How many of you heard someone say about a brother or sister, “He/She’s one of them born again Christians.” Well, with these words today, we know what it looks to be regenerate. Let me make a few observations in closing.

Christianity is a religion of power! Brothers and sisters, if these things are yours, how can you ever view Christianity as some mere man-made religion? No! As Christians we say, “***We are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation . . .***” (Rom. 1:16).

The doctrine of regeneration results in the greatest of humility. You know you cannot reproduce these things on your own. You must be born again. And when you find these evidences in your life, the only thing you can do or say is that Salvation belongs to the Lord. You say with Paul, “**For by grace (we) have been saved through faith. And this is not (of our) own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**” (Eph. 2:8-10)

The doctrine of regeneration teaches us that the power of God in salvation results in glory. In other words, these fruits of regeneration will continue and will lead us from faith to sight. In the verses I read, the verbs are in the continuous, ongoing, tense. In other words, we continue in obedience. We continue to love the commands of Christ. We continue to love our brothers and sisters. We continue to overcome the world. ETC.

Let me end with the familiar words of Rom. 8:28-30: “**And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.**”