Are You Born Again?

I begin today's message with a question. Are you born again? In perhaps the most important chapter found in Holy Scripture Jesus emphatically declares that no one can enter the kingdom of heaven apart from a spiritual birth that occurs by trusting him as the unique Savior of the world. In the first eight verses of chapter three of the gospel of John, Jesus states no less than five times that one must be born again, or born of the Spirit in order to possess eternal life.

The importance of these words cannot be over emphasized. These words come from the most important book in the world—the Bible. They fell from the lips of the most important person in human history—Jesus, the Son of the living God. My friend, what will become of you, your loved ones, your children, and your neighbors who do not experience the new birth? *All must be born again in order to enter the kingdom of heaven!!* The new birth is essential for all those who pass the stage of innocence and are awakened to the guilt of sin. There are no exceptions. All who enter God's heaven and live joyfully in the everlasting kingdom of Almighty God *must* be born again. Since we must be born again in order to possess eternal life, it seems apparent this subject should be given the highest priority in the thinking of every man, woman, boy and girl. Are you *born again?*

My friend, I must say this kindly: *you cannot be a Christian without the new birth.* As a minister of the gospel, this is of great concern. I am afraid there are many among us who are religious, but who are not born again. I am afraid that too often our own children grow up in Christian homes without experiencing the new birth. Such children are destined to take their place in a world that will perish. I am afraid that many grow up in our various Christian denominations without the

reality of the new birth. They have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. Such people become *nominal* Christians. That is, if you ask them if they are Christians the answer would be yes. But their life betrays their confession. Christ is not their life at all. As a matter of fact, many who call themselves Christians have no inner peace about their own relationship to God. Personal assurance about their own salvation is missing because in reality they have not been born again.

May I ask you another question: *is it possible to experience the new birth and not know it?* My friends, I think not! You *must* be born again. And you must possess an inner witness to that reality. I beg you not to rest until you know that you are born again. It is my prayer that the remainder of this sermon will open your eyes and bring you to new life in Christ.

Let's begin by reading 1 John 1:1-7:

1That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;
2(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)
3That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.
4And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.
5This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
6If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Please note in verse six the insistence of the apostle John that it is not possible to have fellowship with God and walk in spiritual darkness at the same time. Said another way, it is not possible to walk in spiritual darkness and be born again at the same time. Now, let's proceed through several passages from this letter and allow John to expound upon what he means by *spiritual darkness.*

First, look with me at 1 John 2:22-23:

22Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.
23Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

In chapter four John goes on to say, *"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."* Again, he goes on to say in chapter five, *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."* My friend, the new birth can only be experienced by those who are willing to confess that Jesus is the Christ, and as such is the unique Son of God! The new birth occurs as one believes upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I ask you this question: *do you confess that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah, who died for your sins and rose bodily from the grave? Do you confess that the Messiah is God come in the person of Jesus the Christ, which is exactly what the Bible means by the title "Son of God?"*

Those outside of Christendom who refuse to acknowledge the person of Christ are not born again. But the same can be said for a great host of so-called "Christians" who constitute a growing number of people inside Christendom. No one is free to re-define the person of Christ. Failure to believe that Jesus is the unique Son of God leaves one dead in sin, estranged from God! My friend, in order to experience the new birth you must come to God in humble repentance and with faith in his only begotten Son.

Now look with me at 1 John 2:3-6:

3And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.
4He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
5But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.
6He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

Boy, have you noticed that the apostle doesn't mix words here! He says that those who claim to know Christ but have no interest in obeying him are liars. May I say this clearly, *those who are born again have a new desire to follow and obey Jesus Christ!* Do you have that desire? Do you respect what Jesus Christ teaches in his written word? Imperfect obedience is not the issue, rather professing to be a disciple and setting in judgment on the teachings of Christ is! Those born of the Spirit will possess a deep reverence for the commandments of Christ as they learn them. They will exhibit the spirit of Christ in their own lives in a growing measure. We desire to walk even as he walked. In chapter three John states it this way, *"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him."*

The born again experience produces a heart that is willing to obey Christ. Are you willing to obey Christ and follow him as you learn his will?

Now look with me at 1 John 3:14-15:

14We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.
15Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Earlier in chapter two John also said, *"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now."* You should take note that John is obviously dealing with the problem of those in the visible church who lack the new birth. The greatest characteristic of those who experience the new birth will be the love that they have for one another. Jesus insisted that this is, in fact, the one way the world would recognize his true disciples. It is our love for one another that identifies us as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to be born again and *not* love the brethren!! Think about that! John is not dealing with the problem of immaturity. He is dealing with the reality of the Spirit of God shedding the love of God abroad in our heart as a result of the new birth. There is a common bond between real believers that manifests in genuine love. Do you love God's people? To be born again is to be born of love.

Now, quickly let's look at 1 John 3:3-10:

3And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.
4Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.
5And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

6Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.
7Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.
8He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.
9Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.
10In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

In these verses the apostle makes it abundantly clear that those born again *cannot* embrace what God condemns! It is obvious from chapter one that real believers must confess their sins (1:9), so John is not saying here that those born again will never suffer personal failure. Rather, he is insisting that whosoever is born of God cannot practice open rebellion against the known will of God. I think one of the clear examples of this in our present culture is the push to legitimize sodomy. My friends, the Lord condemns that practice and those who are born again will not attempt to legitimize what God has clearly condemned. It is one thing to struggle with temptation and perhaps even fall into wrong behavior. It is an entirely different thing to willfully embrace and proceed to practice what the Lord condemns. Do you see the point? John states this same principle at the end of chapter two where we read, *"If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."*

Conclusion

Are you born again? Do you confess that Jesus is the Christ, the only begotten Son of God, God come in the flesh for your salvation? Can you point to a definite experience when you trusted him as Savior? Did that experience give you a desire to follow Christ in humble obedience? Do you demonstrate an obvious love for fellow believers? And do you possess a reverence for what God says is right and wrong? Do you practice righteousness because your heart sides with God against sin? These are not trivial matters. If you claim to be a Christian, then these things *will* be real in your life. Now, I ask you again: are you born again?

I am finishing this message with a verse from this letter that puts the finger on why so many remain in darkness. It is found in these words from chapter two, verse 15: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* You will never be born again as long as you love this world. We must overcome this world. The apostle says in chapter five, *"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"*

My friend, the world lies in spiritual darkness. The world is full of the spirit of anti-Christ. The world embraces many false gods. The world denies the Lordship of Christ and they neglect so great salvation. But the world will not escape the judgment of God. Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Left outside the kingdom there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. My friend, it is time to repent and to give your heart to Christ. It is time to be born again!

Additional Reading

Take the time to carefully read the gospel of John chapter three verses one through twenty-one. Take careful note of verse fourteen and fifteen. Like the ancient Israelites who were dying from snake bites but looked to God's provision for physical healing, we must recognize we are dying in our sin and must look upon God's provision for our forgiveness to be healed spiritually. That provision is the cross of Christ. He was lifted up on the cross so that all may look upon him in faith and be born again. Do you know you are lost? Then look upon the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, believe upon him. Accept this death and resurrection for your forgiveness of sin. When you believe upon him you will receive eternal life, that is, you will be born again! Amen.