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John Chapter 3. And then our focus this morning will be on verses 1-10. Jesus meeting with Nicodemus.

Read John 3:1-21. Prayer

Well, we have seen the lengthy prologue by the Apostle in John 1:1-18, where he goes behind the scenes of the economy of salvation, to show us the relations between the Son and the Father. The public ministry of Christ begins properly in chapter 1 at verse 19. The testimony of John the Baptist, where he declares that Jesus truly is the Son of God. And then we see early disciples come to our Lord at the end of, or in the middle of and at the end of chapter 1. And then his ministry goes to Cana of Galilee, where He makes the water into wine, changes that existing material into not just wine, but excellent, good wine, which shows the beauty of the new covenant and all its fullness and its arrival. And then Jesus goes to the temple and there He cleanses it and drives out the money changers. He drives out the animals, He rebukes them, and the disciples consciously reflect upon the Psalms. Psalm 69, and in particular, 'The zeal of Thy house has consumed me. And then Jesus goes against the religious leaders. There in the temple He says, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. Of course, they don't understand this. John comments for us that He is speaking of the temple of His body. So already at the outset of His public ministry, John is telling us about His death and His resurrection.

Now Jesus has a private meeting. He meets with one of those temple authorities, but in a private setting. And when we looked at this particular passage, it underscores how chapter 2 ends. Notice, chapter 2, verse 25, 'And He had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man'. He addresses Nicodemus question, without Nicodemus even having asked the question. He will do the same thing in John 4, where He will tell the Samaritan women certain things concerning her ethical situation. In fact, she'll go to her village and say, Come and see the Man who told me all the things that I ever did. So what John is doing is, he's moving from this public ministry of Jesus in the temple to these private meetings now, to underscore the reality that He knew what was in man, and that He would speak specifically concerning their issues. As well, when we go back to the prologue, John chapter 1, we see commentary now on John 3, concerning what was written in John 1. Notice in John 1 at verse 8. He says, He was not that light (John the Baptist), but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light which gives light to every man coming into the world. Remember what Jesus says there in the last part of our reading in John 3. The darkness hates the light. The darkness doesn't want to come to light, because the light exposes it. We've already been prepared for that. Notice in verse 10. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his Name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. In other words, man is dead in his trespasses and sins. Man does not have it

Man does not have it in himself to choose for Jesus. He can't just make a decision. He can't just wake up one cloudy morning and say, you know, my life's a mess, I'm going to go ahead and follow Jesus, my Lord. He is dead in his trespasses and sins. He must be made alive by the power of God most high and that God must supply to him the graces of faith and repentance, so that he may close with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

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So we'll first look at the question posed by Nicodemus, in verses 1 and 2. Secondly, the response given by the Lord Jesus in verses 3-8. And then, finally the confusion of Nicodemus in verses 9 and 10.

But notice in the first place, the identification of the man. It says, there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He was mentioned again in chapter 7, verse 50, where we surmise that he was part of the Sanhedrin. He's mentioned again later in a favorable sense in John 19, at verse 39. He accompanies Joseph of Arimathea in burying the body of the Lord Jesus. So he comes out on the proper end. But initially, there's more going on in this particular interchange than just a curious desire for information. He is a spokesman. He is a ruler of the Jews. History tells us he was quite a notable figure from a very wealthy family. He is described here as a ruler of the Jews, and he is a spokesman. He says, we know you come from God. And then in verse 8, when Jesus says, 'You must be born again', it's not singular, it's plural. Jesus recognizes that Nicodemus is a spokesman for the religious leadership in Jerusalem, who've no doubt dispatched Nicodemus to find out what this man is all about. Remember, He's made a ruckus in the temple, He actually arrogated to Himself the prerogative of cleaning the house of His Father. We want to know what this Man is made of, and so Nicodemus is the errand boy on this particular activity. Notice that he comes at night. This is a negative in John's gospel. It is always a negative connotation, when night is mentioned. Not because night is bad, or night is evil, but it's the way the John structures the narrative thematically. So already we see that this isn't just some guy wandering around Jerusalem who meets Jesus and says, boy, I have these real legitimate questions for you and I would really like to pick your brain, and I really want to understand what you are all about. No, it's a little bit more than that. He's a proud, arrogant man. Thankfully, he does get humble, and thankfully he is one at the end of the gospel, who does turn out well by God's grace. Notice, he ascribes a term of respect to our Lord. Verse 2, Rabbi. That's a good title. Teacher, Rabbi, one who has some degree of authority. How does he know, or rather, what does he then say, concerning this rabbi? He says, 'We know that you are a teacher come from God'. We know that your origin is from God. Again, brethren, I'm not convinced he's altogether honest at this point. Remember, Jesus has just gone into their temple, and Jesus has just caused a ruckus in their temple. I'm not convinced that the Sanhedrin collectively is saying or concluding at this level, or at this point in Jesus ministry, 'Oh, yeah, we know He's from God, we know that He's legit. We know that He's upright, and we know that He's righteous'. Now he says, we know this, and then he evokes the signs that Jesus had done. We've seen up to this point, only one sign, the changing of the water in the wine. But we know from the end of John's Gospel, specifically in John, chapter 21, that Jesus did many other signs that are not written in this book. But in so far as it goes, Nicodemus and the Sanhedrin were conscious of the plurality of signs that Jesus had done up to this point.

Now notice the response given by the Lord Jesus, in verses 3-8. In the first place, the issue is addressed by Jesus, verse 3. Jesus answered and said to him, most assuredly, I say to you. Literally, Amen, Amen I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. No question asked. But as we follow the dialogue, we know that is precisely what Nicodemus has in his mind and in his heart. Jesus knows all men, Jesus knows the particular issue at stake. Jesus addresses this for sure. And Nicodemus

doesn't say, well, it wasn't in my mind. I wondered about the latter day glory, I wondered about the eschatology, you know, eschaton, when it comes again. That's not what he's concerned about. How does a man enter into the kingdom of God? And to his credit brethren, in terms of Nicodemus, and even in terms of the Sanhedrin, whom Nicodemus is representing, at least they ask the question. There's a lot of people today that have zero concern with entry into the kingdom of God. They deny its existence, they ridicule its existence, they don't even think about its existence. But at least these men were conscious of the fact there is a God, that this God has a kingdom, and that there is either entrance into it or exclusion from it. I suspect there are many today that don't even get to this level. If you've ever gone door to door, if you've ever gone downtown, if you've ever confronted people with their sin and their need for the Savior, so many of them look at you blankly. What are you talking about? What is it that you are saying? It's almost like you're reciting a page out of a Japanese phonebook. They look at you in the same way. There is no concern in our society on the part of a great multitude for the things of God. This is a great concern. We are a materialistic age. We only think that the things that we can see and touch and feel and hear are true and real. We only think about the next 80 years. What happens after that, who cares, I can't be bothered with it. So at least this man, and we see later to his benefit, this man thought in terms of a kingdom that was of God, and that could be entered or that could be excluded from. And so, Jesus goes right to the issue, and notice the way that Jesus describes this. Jesus answered and said to him, Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Have you ever met professing Christians who deny much of the bible, or professing Christians who are okay with abortion, or professing Christians who are okay with say, euthanasia, or professing Christians that have sort of no moral backbone whatsoever and you wonder, what's their problem? Most likely, they're not born again. Most likely, they're not saved, most likely, they have not been born from above. Most likely, they've been caught up in the moment, or they identify as a Christian because they're not Muslim, or they're not a Buddhist, or they're not an atheist. They know something must exist. And because we live in a Christian nation I'll go ahead and adopt Christianity. In fact, you'll hear at times people refer to people like us, oh well, they're born again Christians. You've got your normal sort of garden variety Christian that looks like everybody else in the world. And then there's the nutjob conspiracy weirdos like us that are born again Christians. There's no such thing as an unregenerate Christian. There's no such thing as just, oh, well, I'm with people that are Christians, so therefore I'm a Christian. It may be okay in our society to identify as a cat, but with reference to the kingdom of God, you cannot simply identify as a participant without faith in the Savior. Without repentance unto life, without fruit, and by fruit, I don't mean unto salvation, but this is a lively evidence of the presence of faith, which faith itself is an evidence that one has been born again. One has been regenerated by the power of God most high.

So Jesus goes right to the heart of the issue. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And then verse 5, he speaks of entering the kingdom of God. I think those terms are used synonymously and interchangeably. And what I think it means, it means to be a participant in the kingdom of God. To be a participant in that blessing realm, wherein God has sway over the hearts of His people, and they serve Him and they love Him, and they honor Him. Now, when Jesus says, you must be born again or unless one is born again, the word that is used here can be defined as either again, or from above. I honestly think that this particular term is utilized by Jesus with both senses. Now Nicodemus interprets it as being born again a second time, when he asks, What's a

man to do? Should a grown man go back into his mother's womb in order that he can be born again? So born from above is certainly correct, but born again is certainly correct as well. We are born in Adam, we need to be born again in our Lord Jesus Christ. So, it is a term that can do double duty. And Cyril of Alexandria made this very perceptive observation. He says, and when he says that the rebirth of the Holy Spirit is from above, he shows clearly that the Spirit is of the substance of God the Father, just as of course Jesus says about Himself, I am from above. So Cyril, the commentator understands that this idea of from aboveness underscores the reality that the Holy Spirit is of the same substance as the Father. And if you think back to the prologue, what happens to those who by God's grace are born, they are born of God, according to chapter 1, at verse 30. When we see that they're born of the Spirit, again the doctrine that we studied last hour, of inseparable operations. Everything that God does, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have one will one power. They create the world, They govern the world and They redeem the elect out of the world. But at times in the Bible, scripture appropriates, to one of the persons of the Godhead, a unique aspect of work, and here we see that to be born of the Spirit is to be born of God. So Nicodemus understands it as a second time. But the specific point again is that one must be born again, can't miss that. Everybody got that? You have to be born again. You have to be reborn, born from above, or again, in terms of moving from one place, one state, into another. The apostle Peter uses the language that God calls us out of darkness into marvelous light, so that we may proclaim his praises. And when we look at this particular terminology that the Lord Jesus is using, He is not saying there, is not giving a command. He's not saying, okay Nicodemus, I give you a command, go be born again. That's how persons understand this passage, and it's false. It's incorrect. It's wrong. The idea that a man can be born again by his own power, by his own agency, by his own resources is a denial of the doctrine of total inability, John 6:44. No one, Jesus say, can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. No one. That's inclusive of every single human being. The apostle Paul says in Romans 8:7 and 8, he talks about the carnal mind is enmity against God, cannot please God, we are dead in our trespasses and sins, we cannot make ourselves alive. This is not a command given by Jesus for the sinner to obey. It is rather a statement of reality that must happen before a sinner believes the gospel. In other words, he is highlighting that regeneration, verse 3, precedes saving faith, verse 16. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him. Well, how does a person get to the point where they believe the gospel of our Lord Jesus? It's because God has caused them to be born again. It's because God has caused them to be born from above.

You perhaps are new to this church, and you've heard the word Reformed, or you've heard the word Calvinism. The opposite of Calvinism, well, the gross opposite is something called Palagianism. But the more common opposite is what's call Arminianism. And Arminians teach this is in fact a command to be

You must be made alive in order to believe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Last week, our brother read Philippians 1. What does Philippians 1:29 tell us about faith? It's a gift given by God. What does Paul say in Ephesians 2:8-10? That faith is a gift given by God. Who does He give it to? He gives it to those he makes alive in regeneration, whether we want to call it being born again, or born from above

obeyed. Armenian's say that you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then God will make you be born again. But that's not what the text says. Calvin, or Calvinism, and the Reformed tradition is right, you must be born again. You must be made alive in order to believe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Last week, our brother read Philippians 1. What does Philippians 1:29 tell us about faith? It's a gift given by God. What does Paul say in Ephesians

2:8-10? That faith is a gift given by God. Who does He give it to? He gives it to those he makes alive in regeneration, whether we want to call it being born again, or born from above. Now it doesn't happen that on a Tuesday, you're born again. And then you know, next September, you get faith to close with Christ. No, it's more of a logical distinction than chronological in nature. And when we come to scripture, we see the emphasis right here in John 3, the same emphasis underscored by the apostle Paul in Romans chapter 9, and the same emphasis that we find with reference to saints glorified in heaven. That is common with what the prophet Jonah confessed, in Jonah 2:9. What does the prophet there say? Salvation is of the Lord. It's not of Nicodemus, it does not depend upon him who wills, or upon him who runs, but on God who shows mercy. That's Romans 9:16. The saints in heaven praise God, and the Lamb who sits on the throne. What's the subject matter of their praise? Salvation belongs to our God, and to the Lamb that sits upon the throne. This idea that man, dead in his trespasses and sins, can make himself alive by believing in the Lord Jesus, gets this passage exactly backwards. Jesus stresses to Nicodemus that unless this sovereign act of God most High comes upon you, such that now you look unto the Lord Jesus Christ in faith, you will never enter the kingdom of God, you will never enter bliss, to paradise, to heaven, to blessedness. Now when persons hear this they say, well, that doesn't seem very kind. That doesn't seem very fair. That doesn't seem very good. Well, understand this, brethren, God delights to do this. Understand that in the book of Revelation, it's not a handful. It's not the frozen chosen before the throne of grace. It is rather a great multitude that no man can number. To say, well, you're going to strip away from the sinner any hope. No, to strip the hope from the sinner, is to say that the sinner has the power to save himself. That is hopelessness. But there is hope in God. There is mercy to be had in our Lord. There is blessedness in Yahweh. The whole bible expresses and declares to us the saving purposes of our God, such that the apostle can celebrate in 2nd Corinthians 5 by saying that God is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. Notice the language in John 3:16. World there doesn't mean every single human being without exception. It means men without distinction, whether you're a Jew, whether you're a Gentile, whether you're an American, or a Canadian, whether you're from China or Japan, whether you're from the continent of Africa, doesn't matter. It is without distinction, no without exception. But it is curious, the language that is employed. God so loved the world. See, this idea that there's going to be a handful that fall into heaven at the final day is wrong. This idea that Christ didn't actually atone for the sins of many, is wrong. Christ came to save a great multitude that no man can number, He's in the business. So, before you say, well that strips hope from the sinner, understand what you're saying. The sinner is dead in his trespasses and sins. The sinner doesn't have the wherewithal to choose for Jesus. God has the ability to make him alive, to grant him the graces of faith and repentance, to give him the ability to close with Jesus in faith. And God delights to do that. That's why we pray, God send the spirit on Sunday preaching. God send the spirit, not only on the preacher, but on the hearer. Open the heart. You see that convention used at the riverside in Phillipi in Acts 16. Those ladies are there studying the bible, and the apostle Paul comes to declare to them the way as it is in Jesus, and it says the Lord opened Lydia's heart. This isn't confined to John 3. It is a most hope filled doctrine, the reality of which is that God most high saves to the uttermost all who draw nigh unto Him, through His son the Lord Jesus Christ, and that by His grace, that by His power, and then ultimately for His honor and praise. Notice several passages. Turn to the book of Acts, Acts 13. I already mentioned 16:14, where God opens Lydia's heart. But notice Acts 13:48. Now when the gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord, and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. There was an appointment to eternal life by God in eternity past. And in time, under the gospel preaching, those who had been appointed now, believe that gospel.

What happened? What changed things? What was the new dynamic, or the new element introduced into those who believed? They were born again, they were born from above, they were made anew, they were called out of darkness into marvelous light, to confess the glory of God Almighty. Turn over to 2nd Corinthians, chapter 5. Several passages again to illustrate this idea of a new birth or regeneration. 2nd Corinthians, chapter 5 verse 17. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is what? A new creation. Did we create ourselves anew? Did we wake up one day and say, man, I'm such a miserable wretch, I'm going to go ahead and make myself new? No, he's a new creation by the power of God Almighty. Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new. Turn over to Galatians chapter 6. The big issue in Galatia was circumcision. Judaizers said, good to believe in Jesus, but you must also be circumcised. So, faith plus works in order for salvation. Look what Paul says concerning circumcision in Galatians 6:15. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but what? A new creation. They must be born again, they must be born from above. Look at Ephesians chapter 2. Look at verses 1 and following. And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins. See, the Armenian and Pelagian can't answer the question. How does a dead man make himself believe? How does a dead man exercise faith? I mean, brethren, think about it. Paul doesn't say you're crippled, you are maimed, you had a bit of a limp, you were a little bit hindered. No, what metaphor does he use? When he comes to deal with the spiritual man, he deals in the language of death. And you being dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. Do you see who Paul's including in here? Do you think Paul just had an epiphany on the road to Damascus? Does Paul, in Acts 9 say, you know, I'm not gonna go to Damascus, I'm not going to go round up those believers? I'm not going to bring them back to Jerusalem, and they're not going to see them further persecuted, because I've just decided to make myself new, I'm a new man today? No, Christ comes to him. Christ humbles him, Christ changes him, Christ makes him a new man, in Christ Jesus. So, Paul includes himself in that mass of humanity, and basically he says all men everywhere before Christ, in terms of salvation, are lifeless, helpless and hopeless.

Now verse 4, 'But God'. That's a beautiful two words, But God. Martin Lloyd Jones has a whole sermon on those two words, But God. It's sort of like the nevertheless in Ezekiel 16. God rehearsing how He comes upon the nation. When I came to you, you were in your blood, you're writhing around, you are filthy and disgusting. But I said, Live, Live. And then I took you and I decked you out, I put jewels on you, I gave you everything, I conferred benefit, I conferred blessing. What the prophet says in Ezekiel 16:25 is offensive to most hearers today. The prophet goes on, or God through the prophet says, you're not like other harlots. Harlots do what they do in order to make money. You're the kind of a harlot that pays the man to do what he's doing to her. But then as God continues through the prophet Ezekiel, there's a nevertheless. Nevertheless, I will regather you to myself. Nevertheless, I will include you in the covenant blessing of God. Nevertheless, I will not cut you off completely. That's how this, but God, functions in verse 4. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, notice the language, made us live together with Christ. Does a man make himself alive together with Christ? Not according to Paul. It is God most high, who makes a man alive together with Christ. The new birth, regeneration, to be born again, to be born from above is crucial with reference to entry into the kingdom of God. Turn to Titus, chapter 3, where the actual language of regeneration is used by the apostle Paul. Notice in Titus, chapter 3 at verse 4. But when the

kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, notice the emphasis in the next three words, He saved us. Brethren, that's the simple sentence. All the other stuff surrounding it just fleshes that out. It's window decoration to show us how great God's salvation is. But if you ask the question, what's the simple sentence in verse 5? The simple sentence, He saved us. Now attendant to His saving us, notice at the beginning of verse 5. Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Turn over to 1st Peter. Again, just to show you that the apostles understood what Jesus was talking about in terms of regeneration, the new birth, being born again or born from above. Notice in chapter 1 at verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father, just like Paul in Ephesians 1:3, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul and Peter understood and knew the Old Testament. This was a formula in order to praise God. It was called Berakah, from the Hebrew blessing. You see it all throughout the Psalms, you see it in Solomon blessing God at the temple dedication. It was a convention utilized by the men of God, to give vent to their glorifying God. So, he says, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Note in verse 23, well verse 22. Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart having been born again. In other words, you're doing this, not because you're great guys and girls, you're doing this because you're in the state of having been born again. Because when we're not born again, what is typical of us? When we're not born again, what is true of us? We don't care about others. We look out only for our own interests. We're like Narcissus, who looks in the water and can't look away because he's gazing at how beautiful he is. That's us in Adam. That's not fantasy, that's not fiction, that's Bible. And yet, now because we've been born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the Word of God, who lives and abides forever. You see, the instrumentality of the word, we're born of the Spirit, but the Spirit works in, by, through and with the word. This is why in Romans 10, the apostle says, faith comes by hearing and hearing by what? By the word of God. We don't just say, wow, look at Mt Cheam, doesn't it look beautiful today, and wow, we're born again. No, it's the truth of the gospel to the glory of Christ. It's His life, it's His death, it's His resurrection. When sinners hear that in the spirit of God, the spirit causes them to be born again, to be born anew. Not in every instance obviously, but according to His sovereign purpose and plan. Turn over to 1st John. While you're turning there, the apostle Paul refers to the new birth. He refers to it as life giving resurrection with Christ, we've seen that. And as the divine work of new creation, we've that a man makes this observation, it is particularly John following the teaching of Jesus Himself, who is in a unique sense, the theologian of the birth from above. We have the dialogue with Nicodemus that we're looking at in John 3. And just so you're satisfied, or just so you know, we're not going to finish John 3:1-10 today. So, I don't think we're going till three, we're not going till three. I think it's important that we get sort of this understanding of what's in view with reference to John 3:3, when Jesus says, A man must be born again, if he is to enter the kingdom of God.

So, he says, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

But notice in John 2 at verse 29. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. Notice the emphasis, brethren. It's not, practice righteousness, and then you'll be born of Him. You practice righteousness, because you have been born of Him. Does everybody see that? Everybody get that, brethren? And we're not Armenians. We are not Pelagians. We are Reformed Christians who understand basic grammar. That's what we're finding in passages like these. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. Now, there's others in John, but look at 1st John 5:1. For those who think, well, we got to believe and then we'll be born again, that not only gets the dialogue with Nicodemus exactly backwards, but it gets 1st John 5:1 exactly backwards as well. And the grammar is the same that you have in 2:29. So, we practice righteousness, why? Because we have been born of God. Now notice in 1st John 5:1. Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves Him who is begotten of Him. Notice the emphasis in the first part, whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Not, whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, that is the key by which now he is born again. No, that fact is, is that we believe that Jesus is the Christ, because we have been born of God. And that reflects the pattern in John chapter 3, verses 1-10, or the dialogue with Nicodemus, verses 11 -21. In Jesus discourse on salvation, notice that the new birth comes first, and then comes faith, in John 3:16. Brethren, when we appreciate this, it gives us great cause to return praise and honor and glory to our God, because we, like Israel, we're writhing in our blood. We, like Israel, we're dead in our trespasses and sins. We were lifeless, helpless and hopeless, but God, who rich in mercy, with the great love wherewith He loved us, made us alive together with Christ Jesus. It is a most blessed emphasis that underscores the reality that salvation is of the Lord. If we want to look at the other references in terms of being born of God in 1st John, also note 3:9, 4:7, 5:4 and 5:18. So I think Romans right. It is John, following the pattern of the Savior in John chapter 3, who is the theologian of the birth from above. Typically the apostle, not that he doesn't deal with regeneration, because we just, the apostle Paul, we just saw that he does. But Paul oftentimes looks at our relationship to God through Christ in terms of adopted sons and daughters of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when John comes to deal, he looks at it as we have been born of God most high. But the emphasis in both facets is on God. He is the power, His is the sovereignty, His is the glory, and it is His will that makes us alive together with Christ Jesus.

In Jesus discourse on salvation, notice that the new birth comes first, and then comes faith, in John 3:16. Brethren, when we appreciate this, it gives us great cause to return praise and honor and glory to our God, because we, like Israel, we're writhing in our blood. We, like Israel, were dead in our trespasses and sins. We were lifeless, helpless and hopeless, but God, who rich in mercy, with the great love wherewith He loved us, made us alive together with Christ Jesus

Calvin says, the psalm of Christ discourse is that in order that we may be His true disciples, we must become new men. We must be born again. And I would suggest that is a good time for us to examine our hearts. Again, I started the sermon, have you met those people that said, well, I'm a Christian, and they don't live like that, they don't sound like it? Now, brethren, and that can be said of every Christian.

The apostle Paul faces, you know, really, the doctrine of remaining corruption in Romans 7. He tells us, the good that I want to do, I don't do it, and the evil I don't want to do I find myself doing. Galatians 5:17, he says, the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit lusts against the flesh, and these two are contrary to one another, so that you don't do the things that you want. So Paul understands remaining corruption. It was not without a fact that the hymn writer wrote, we are prone to wander and prone to leave the God that we love, I'm not talking about that. I'm not talking about remaining corruption. I'm not talking about the day in, day out struggles that the people of God face on a regular basis. And will until the final day. Brethren, do you understand that? If you're not in this for the long haul, then it's arguable that you've never been born again. The people of God understand that until that day, when I either die or have translated in the presence of my blessed Savior, or He returns in glory, to judge the living and the dead, and then welcomes me in, until that day, I'm going to struggle until that day. I'm going to battle until that day. I have to put to death the deeds of the body. Until that day, I have to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. That's what we signed up for. We're justified freely by His grace, our sins are forgiven us, we have His righteousness by which we will be accepted in the beloved on that great day. But in terms of the Christian life, and the here and now, it is not for the faint hearted. It is not for the coward, it is not for the weakling. It is for those who understand that God's grace is sufficient, that He gives us what we need each and every day to fight manfully onward. So, having made that qualification again, we return to that class of people that are Christians, because they're not Buddhists. They're Christians, because they're not Muslims. They're Christians who make it a separation between, well, I'm not like one of those born againers. Brethren, are we born again? Have we, by the grace of God become new men and new women in Christ Jesus? The reflex of that is faith in Christ. For God so loved that world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever what? Believeth in Him. In other words, when one is born again, just like when one comes out of the womb, what happens or at least used to happen? Today the baby could due the doctor. But the doctor used to slap them on the behind so that they would breathe. That was the reflex. You come out of the safety of the womb, you get a smack on the bottom, so that it shows that you can breathe by crying. It is a beautiful sound to every new parent. It's the same with regeneration. What do we do after we're born again? We breathe, we believe, we look unto the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have not faith, you're not born again.

Now, when secondly, by God's grace, we're born again, and we believe the gospel, John tells us that there will be features of our lives that are consistent with that. You can turn back to 1st John. John in his gospel tells us that, I write these things so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that believing in His name, you may have everlasting life. So John 20:30,31, John the apostle tells us why he writes the gospel. But John the apostle tells us why he writes his first epistle. Notice in 1st John chapter 5 at verse 13. These things I have written to you, who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. **So he writes the gospel so that you'll look unto Jesus, believe on Him and have everlasting life. He writes the first epistle so that you may have comfort, that you may have assurance, that you may have that stability, that you may have that security that goes part and parcel with faith.** It is not an essential element, but most often, it is part and parcel of saving faith. Now back into his epistle, he tells us what it will look like to those who are born of God. We've already seen 1st John 5:1, they'll believe that Jesus is the Christ. How you know a man is born again? Because he's heard and he's believed that the life, the death, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is what is needful to believe unto everlasting life. In other words, it's not our good works. It's the good works of the Savior.

It's not our ability to atone for sin. It's the Savior's ability to atone for sin. So Christ is everything. In the language of the bridegroom, and the Song of Solomon, Christ is altogether lovely. Christ is chief among 10,000. That's the reflex for those who have been born again, faith in Jesus. But then, notice as well what John tells us. There will be a practice of righteousness, we see that in 1st John 2:29. Remember all of the qualifications made earlier about remaining sin, remember all of the qualifications earlier about Romans 7 and Galatians 5, and the reality that there is remaining sin in our hearts until that day, when we enter into Emmanuel's land. Nevertheless, in terms of the Christian, not perfectly, not spotlessly, not without blemish, but he will hate those things that are sinful, and he will love those things that are righteous, right? The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Christ speaking His wisdom and the book of Proverbs, Proverbs chapter 8. Well, notice in first. 2:29, if you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone that practices righteousness is born of Him. So I want you, John says, to know that you have eternal life. What's an indicator? What's a mark? What's a way that we can know? We practice righteousness. Again, not unto salvation. We can't practice that level or degree of righteousness. But because we've been saved, we practice righteousness. Notice, secondly, there is a love for the brethren. 1st John, chapter 4, there's a beloved brother I know who said, this is one of the ways I know that I am born again, because at one time I didn't love the people of God, and now I do. It's just that simple brethren. Notice in 1st John 4:7, beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Now that doesn't mean you're everybody's bestest friend. That doesn't mean you spend 24/7 with one another. That doesn't mean we become hippies and live in communes. That's not what it means. But it does mean that the people of God, get this, they love the people of God. They really do. They take seriously Ephesians 4, they endeavor to keep the unity in the spirit and the bond of peace. They take seriously the emphasis in Philippians 2:1-4, in terms of looking out for the interests of others, not esteeming themselves as the best and the greatest, but esteeming others as better than themselves. Love for the brethren is a mark, an indicator, a help that one has been born of God. And then notice as we, overcoming the world and the wicked one. 1st John 5:4, For whatsoever is born of God, overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? What an encouraging statement, isn't it? You overcome the world because you're eight feet tall and bulletproof? No, because you serve the Savior. You overcome the world because you're more wiser than everybody else who has gone before you? No, you serve the one in whom all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge are hid. You serve Christ, you believe Christ, you've been born of God, you believe the Savior. And by that grace you overcome the world. You fight onward. You may be depressed, you may be melancholy, you may not feel like getting up, but you do so not because you're strong, but because He is. And you march on, you go forward, you fear Him and you love Him and you adore Him. Again, not because you're great, but because He's great. And He's caused you to be born again to look unto His Son in faith, and He's promised, yes, He's promised an overcoming of the world by His people. Now, the only reason I don't have that the one who does or has been born of God believes truth, or values truth rather, because I don't think there is a statement in there, I hope whoever loves the truth has been born of God, but I think it can be inferred. I'd like to think it can be implied, those born of God love God, those born of God love God's people, those born of God love His truth. In other words, the word of God is valuable to them. It is precious to them. If you want to see a born again man celebrate the word of God, read Psalm 119, all 176 verses. David celebrates the word of God, the truthfulness of it, the veracity of it. He says, Your word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You. He says, I value your work more than rubies, more than gold. He says that the law of

Yahweh makes wise the simple. He says that the law of God has made me more wise than all of my counselor and teachers. Those born of God do not take a limp wristed hold of the truth. But rather they grab it, they hold on to it, and they never let it go. There is too much wishy washiness in the church today, relative to God's word. Brethren, it is the inspired, infallible, inerrant word of the living and true God. I suggest we hold on to that. I suggest we fight for it. I suggest we die for it, if called upon to do so. When we look back at the history of the confessors and the history of the martyrs, they didn't take that kind of limp wristed approach to truth. They died for it and they went to the stake for it. One of the men, was it Cranmer or the one that denied and then came back when it come time for him to die. He put his hand in the fire because that was the offending agent. He recanted, and he went into heresy with that hand. So when he comes back to his senses, by grace, and he's burned in the fire, first the hand goes, because that's what betrayed him initially. Where's that kind of faith today? Where's that kind of born of Godness? Where is it when we're faced down with these kinds of people that are telling us to identify as another sex, you can identify as another being. You could just say, no one says anything to this. Brethren, we're living in odd days to say the least. The church shouldn't ape the world. We have the word of the living God. We have a sure guide. We have a blessed map. We have encouragement from on high. We have everything at our disposal. Let's fight, and by fight, I don't mean physically, go get your guns. Brethren, I am talking about the spiritual battle we face. When the apostle says the weapons of our warfare, they're not carnal, but they're mighty for the pulling down of strongholds. But when we sacrifice that primary weapon the offensive element of the armor which is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, it's like we're showing up to a gunfight with a peashooter. We're trying to charge hell with a squirt gun. We have put down our weaponry to try and engage the enemy. They'll always best us.

Remember Stephen last week, on Sunday night, what does Stephen do when he's disputing with the Hellenists? He tests them. He wins them, not so he could pat himself on the back, because how did that go? He ended up being stoned to death by those who didn't want him. But he didn't do what he did lazily, he did it earnestly. He stood up and he disputed with those men. And he reasoned in such a way from scripture and theology that they knew, we can't beat this guy, so have to give false charges, turn him over to the Sanhedrin so they can do the dirty work of putting him to death. Where's the Stephen's today? Where's the Paul's? Where's the Peters? We read of these men, we love these men, we celebrate these men. Brethren, by grace we can hopefully imitate these men in our generation. Are we born again? If we are, the reflex will be faith in Christ. We will by grace, practice righteousness. We will love the brethren. We will overcome the world and we will love, not just, nah it's okay, we'll love the truth of God's Holy Word.

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Prayer.

Feedback? Willing to help with proofreading transcriptions? Email media@freegrace.ca