

The New Birth Nobody Can Fake

Series 1-10

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Introduction to the Series: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake

There are some doctrines in the Bible that men can afford to treat like side issues because, to them, those doctrines do not threaten the old man enough to cause much alarm. They can discuss prophecy charts, church customs, historical questions, denominational habits, and theological terminology while still keeping the flesh comfortable and the religious machine running smoothly. But the doctrine of the new birth is not one of those doctrines. The new birth goes straight to the root of the matter. It does not ask whether a man is moral, sincere, religious, disciplined, emotional, educated, baptized, confirmed, churched, or respected. It asks whether he has life. It asks whether he has passed from death unto life through Jesus Christ. It asks whether what happened to him came from the flesh, from ceremony, from culture, from pressure, and from outward religion, or whether it came from God. That is why this series matters. It is not written to entertain curiosity or stir up empty controversy. It is written to bring the reader face to face with one of the greatest dividing lines in all of Scripture: the difference between religion and regeneration, between profession and possession, between appearance and reality, between a form of godliness and the life of God in the soul of a man. The title of this series is not accidental. *The New Birth Nobody Can Fake* is meant to drive home the truth that while men can imitate church culture, imitate spiritual language, imitate moral reform, imitate emotional passion, and imitate Christian activity, they cannot manufacture divine life. They can copy the sound of religion, but they cannot create the miracle of regeneration.

This series is for several kinds of readers at once. It is for the lost man who has hidden behind religion long enough and needs to be told plainly that what he needs is not improvement but birth from above. It is for the church member who has always assumed that familiarity with Christian things must equal salvation, and who now needs to be shaken awake by the words of Christ, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). It is for the struggling believer who truly has been born of God but has been tormented by confusion, doubt, legalism, or shallow preaching that never explained what happened to him after conversion. It is for the saint who needs stronger assurance because he has forgotten that eternal life is not a probationary arrangement but a real birth into God's family. And it is for the discerning teacher, preacher, and witness who wants to handle the doctrine of salvation with more precision, more gravity, and more biblical force. Throughout this series, we are going to expose the total inability of religion to produce life, the absolute necessity of the new birth as taught by Jesus Christ Himself, the connection between regeneration and the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, the radical distinction between flesh and Spirit, the visible effects of life without turning those effects into works-salvation, the inward war between the two natures in the believer, the permanence of sonship and eternal life, and the painful reality that not every profession is genuine. In other words, this

series is designed to strip away false refuge on the one hand and strengthen biblical certainty on the other. It will confront the counterfeit without surrendering grace, and it will defend assurance without excusing sin.

What we cover in this series is therefore not a collection of disconnected devotional thoughts, but a deliberate doctrinal progression. We begin where Christ began, with the necessity of being born again, and then move into why religion cannot produce that birth, why flesh remains flesh no matter how religious it becomes, and why the Word of God is the incorruptible seed by which men are born again. From there, we move into the miracle itself as a passage from death unto life, then into the visible effects of regeneration, the conflict between flesh and Spirit in the born-again man, and the unbreakable reality of eternal life as a birth that cannot be undone. We then confront false conversions and religious counterfeits before bringing the whole series to its climax by exalting the new birth as the greatest miracle God performs in a sinner. So this series is about more than simply defining a doctrine. It is about recovering the weight, glory, necessity, and reality of the new birth in an age that has reduced salvation to slogans, moments, and religious branding. It is about restoring the language of Scripture to its rightful force. It is about showing that Christianity is not first a system to be joined, a culture to be learned, or a morality to be adopted. It is life in Christ. It is a miracle from above. And by the time this series is finished, the aim is that no honest reader will be able to hide comfortably behind religious language ever again, because the central question will be standing in front of him with all the force of heaven behind it: Have you truly been born again?

1 of 10: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake – Why Jesus Said Ye Must Be Born Again

Introduction

There are some doctrines in the Bible that men can afford to play with if all they want is a seminary game, a Sunday school debate, or a denominational food fight. They can argue about timetables, symbols, church government, historical details, and the finer points of prophecy while still managing to smile for the church directory photo and shake hands after the service. But the new birth is not one of those doctrines. The new birth is not a hobby horse for preachers looking to stir up a crowd. It is not a slogan invented by revivalists in America. It is not a clever evangelical brand name. It is not a phrase manufactured by some Bible conference circuit to divide “their kind” of Christians from everybody else. The new birth came from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and when He spoke of it, He did not speak as a motivator, a therapist, or a religious life coach.

He spoke as God manifest in the flesh, and He spoke with the kind of blunt heavenly authority that makes every proud sinner shift in his seat. “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). That is not advice. That is not a suggestion. That is a divine line drawn straight across the throat of every false refuge man ever built.

That statement is especially striking because of the man to whom it was spoken. The Lord did not first introduce the doctrine of the new birth to a drunk staggering through an alley, to a harlot fresh from the street, or to a Roman idolater bowing before stone gods. He gave it to Nicodemus, “a man of the Pharisees,” “a ruler of the Jews” (John 3:1). That means the first man in the New Testament directly told that he must be born again was not some obvious lowlife that the average church crowd would expect to need radical conversion. It was a clean man, a learned man, a respected man, a Bible-reading man, a church man if you want to put it in modern language. He was moral, religious, educated, serious, and devout, and Christ looked straight through the robes, the reputation, the scholarship, and the standing in the community and said, in effect, You still do not have what it takes to enter the kingdom of God unless God does something in you that your religion cannot produce. That one conversation wrecks half the sermons in America because most of them are designed to help the old man feel a little more spiritual without ever telling him he is too ruined to be repaired.

The new birth, then, is not a side issue. It is not a denominational fine point. It is not the sort of doctrine you tuck into the back of a systematic theology book for the overachievers in the room. It is the dividing line between life and death, between possession and profession, between reality and ceremony, between salvation and deception. That is why Satan hates this doctrine. He does not mind religion without regeneration, worship without life, church attendance without conversion, morality without Christ, or emotion without truth. He can live with all of that. In fact, he can use it. What he cannot stomach is the preaching of a doctrine that tells every son of Adam that flesh is so hopelessly corrupt that he must be born from above by the Spirit of God. That doctrine strips the sinner naked, empties the religious man of confidence, and puts all the glory for salvation exactly where it belongs—on the Lord Jesus Christ. So if this series is going to begin right, it must begin where Christ began, with the absolute, non-negotiable, heaven-issued declaration that if a man is not born again, he does not enter. He does not see. He does not come in. He does not belong. He is out, however polished he may appear.

1. Christ Introduced the New Birth, Not Revival Tradition

The first thing that needs to be nailed down like a spike through a rotten board is that the doctrine of the new birth did not come from American camp meetings, Baptist revivalism,

old-fashioned altar calls, or what sneering religionists call “born-again culture.” It came from Jesus Christ. That matters because one of the devil’s slickest tricks is to repackage biblical truth as though it were some narrow sectarian emphasis cooked up late in church history. Men will smirk and say, “Oh, that born-again stuff,” as if it were a novelty. Well, if they have a problem with “that born-again stuff,” their problem is not with a preacher in the South or a tract on a church foyer table. Their problem is with the Son of God. The phrase is not a preacher’s invention. It is Christ’s declaration. “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). If that sounds too strong for the modern religious ear, then the modern religious ear is already out of tune with the Head of the Church.

What makes the matter worse for the critic is that the Lord did not present the new birth as one image among many equally valid options. He did not say a man might be awakened, might be enlightened, might be morally redirected, or might choose a better spiritual path. He did not lay out five roads to God and let Nicodemus pick the one that best suited his personality type. He gave him one necessity. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). That means the language is exclusive. It bars the gate to every other approach. A man may join the synagogue, read the scrolls, tithe his produce, memorize the law, and impress the town council, but if he is not born again, he cannot even see the kingdom of God. Christ did not say he would have trouble understanding it. He said he cannot see it. That is spiritual blindness, not mere ignorance. That is total inability, not mild confusion.

This is one reason the doctrine remains so hated. Men can tolerate Jesus as an ethical teacher because they imagine they can admire Him from a distance and select whatever parts of His message flatter them. But once you let Him speak plainly, once you stop filtering Him through soft religion and sentimental quotations, you discover He says things that destroy every ladder man has built for climbing to heaven. “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). Not ye must improve. Not ye must become more sincere. Not ye must be more committed to community values. Not ye must try to apply kingdom principles to daily living. Ye must be born again. The new birth is not evangelical excess. It is Christ’s own doctrine, and any preacher, church, denomination, or religious system that pushes it to the side is not correcting fanaticism. It is contradicting the Lord.

2. Nicodemus Was Chosen to Destroy Religious Confidence

It is no accident that John 3 begins with Nicodemus. The Holy Spirit did not randomly pick a name out of a hat. He chose the precise case needed to expose the bankruptcy of religion. “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews” (John 3:1). That description is loaded. The Pharisees were the strict men, the separated men, the Scripture men, the standard men, the men everybody pointed to when they wanted an example of

visible seriousness in religion. Nicodemus was not only one of them. He was “a ruler of the Jews.” That means he had standing. He had position. He had recognition. He was not a fringe fanatic standing on the edge of the system. He was in the system, near the top of it, admired by it, and trusted by it. In modern language, he would be the polished professor, the denominational statesman, the respected elder, the moral public conservative, the man mothers would want their sons to become.

That is exactly why Christ’s words fall like an axe. If Jesus had first spoken the doctrine of the new birth to a reprobate wallowing in open filth, religious people would have nodded and said, “Well, of course that fellow needs radical help.” But by speaking it to Nicodemus, Christ blows up the self-confidence of every clean sinner. He reaches the respectable crowd. He reaches the church crowd. He reaches the moral crowd. He reaches the scholar with his notes, the teacher with his outline, the deacon with his tie straight, and the lady with her family Bible and her spotless reputation. He says to all of them through Nicodemus, Your morality is not birth. Your tradition is not birth. Your learning is not birth. Your office is not birth. Your discipline is not birth. Your rank is not birth. Whatever you got by flesh, bloodline, upbringing, ceremony, or scholarship is still short of the kingdom if you have not been born again.

The pride of man hates that because pride will do almost anything but admit total need. A sinner will admit weakness before he admits deadness. He will admit mistakes before he admits ruin. He will admit immaturity before he admits that the whole line from Adam is so corrupt that a second birth is necessary. That is why the Lord chose Nicodemus. He is not simply dealing with one man. He is addressing a whole class of people who hide behind respectability. Nicodemus comes by night, and there is something fitting about that. Religion always arrives in darkness when it comes to Christ on its own terms. It can recognize that there is something divine in Him. “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God” (John 3:2). But knowing Jesus is from God is not the same as being born of God. The devils know things too. The issue is not whether Nicodemus can compliment Christ. The issue is whether Nicodemus has life.

3. The New Birth Is Necessary Because Flesh Cannot Enter the Kingdom

The reason a man must be born again is not because God decided to set an arbitrary rule at the gate just to make things difficult. The reason is rooted in what man is by nature. Jesus explains it with devastating simplicity. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). That verse ought to be painted across the front of every religious building in the world. It settles more arguments in one sentence than ten thousand pages of theology written by men trying to rescue the flesh. Flesh is flesh. It does not matter whether it is educated flesh, baptized flesh, ordained flesh,

enthusiastic flesh, disciplined flesh, or sentimental flesh. Flesh is flesh. The source determines the nature. What comes from Adam remains in Adam unless God does something supernatural.

This truth strikes directly at the whole self-improvement religion that dominates modern preaching. The average message today is basically a spiritualized pep talk designed to coach the old man into behaving more nobly. It tells him how to think better, do better, feel better, relate better, and perform better, but it rarely tells him what Christ told Nicodemus—that his first birth left him in a condition that cannot be refined into fitness for the kingdom. “For they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8). Not they sometimes fail to please God. Not they need a little extra help to please God. They cannot please God. That is inability. That is incapacity. That is why new birth is necessary. If the old nature could be improved into righteousness, Calvary was unnecessary and John 3 was overkill.

The Lord’s language also reveals that the issue is not outward behavior alone but inward nature. Men usually think in terms of acts. They say, I do not do this, I do not do that, I live decently, I try to be fair, I treat people kindly, I pay my bills, I stay out of trouble. But Christ goes below acts to nature. He is not merely dealing with what Nicodemus has done. He is dealing with what Nicodemus is. That is why the new birth is so offensive. It tells man that his problem is not just a dirty record. It is a corrupted root. The fruit is bad because the tree is bad. “A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit” (Matthew 7:17). You do not fix that by stapling prettier fruit onto the branches. You need a new tree. The new birth is God’s answer to man’s nature problem, not merely to his habit problem.

4. Christ Presented the New Birth as an Absolute, Not an Option

There is a kind of syrupy, weak-kneed religion in our time that treats every strong biblical statement as though it were too embarrassing to repeat in public. Everything must be softened, massaged, or reworded so that nobody feels cornered. But Christ cornered Nicodemus. He did not apologize for the sharpness of the message. He did not say, “Now Nicodemus, this is one way to think about spiritual development.” He said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Later He said, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). Those are absolute terms. “Except.” “Cannot.” “Must.” That is not the language of modern interfaith niceness. That is the language of heaven shutting every side door.

That absolute tone matters because men are experts at turning necessities into preferences. Give the sinner an inch and he will turn it into a loophole. Tell him he ought to seek God and he will say he is working on it. Tell him he should think more seriously about

eternity and he will say he has been on a spiritual journey for years. Tell him Christ can enrich his life and he will add Jesus to the shelf along with his other noble interests. But tell him “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7), and suddenly he is forced to deal with a crisis. Either he has this birth or he does not. Either God has done this work in him or He has not. Either he is in possession of life or he is moving through religion under a death sentence. That is why the message is hated. It forces decision by removing ambiguity.

It also exposes the cowardice of preachers who refuse to preach it. A man may talk for an hour about values, grace, belonging, healing, authenticity, brokenness, purpose, legacy, and all the other fashionable church words of the age, but if he will not plainly tell men they must be born again, he is not following the Master. Christ did not leave the matter blurry. Why should the preacher? Why should the teacher? Why should the witness? If the Son of God said it twice to one man in the same conversation, perhaps the church ought to stop whispering it. The only people threatened by clarity on this issue are those trying to preserve a false peace between the saved and the unsaved inside the same religious house.

5. Nicodemus Proves That Biblical Knowledge Alone Is Not Regeneration

Nicodemus was not ignorant of Scripture. He was not an untrained pagan hearing divine revelation for the first time. Jesus said to him, “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” (John 3:10). That is a stinging rebuke. It means Nicodemus should have recognized more than he did from the Old Testament itself. There were already promises about cleansing, new hearts, and the Spirit’s work. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Ezekiel 36:26). “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit” (Psalm 51:17). The law and the prophets had already exposed the failure of external religion and pointed toward an inward work of God. Yet a master in Israel stood face to face with the Messiah and stumbled over the plain necessity of a spiritual birth.

That ought to sober any man who handles biblical material. It is possible to know the language of the Bible without knowing the God of the Bible. It is possible to lecture on Scripture while remaining a stranger to its saving power. It is possible to parse the grammar, trace the doctrine, analyze the history, and still miss the life that the Book points to. There are men who can debate manuscripts, dissect dispensations, chart prophecy, and outline Romans while remaining untouched by regeneration. That is not a slam on doctrine. Doctrine is essential. But doctrine in the head is not regeneration in the heart. Nicodemus proves that scriptural literacy, while valuable, is not the same thing as new birth. A man may be able to explain the road map and still never have traveled the road.

This is why so many religious discussions remain cold, proud, and dead. The men in them know facts, terms, arguments, and positions, but they do not know what it means to have passed from death unto life. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14). There is a kind of living knowledge that comes only when God has done something in the soul. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). Nicodemus had information. What he lacked was transformation. Christ was not impressed with the credentials because heaven is not moved by résumé religion. A master in Israel still needed what the poorest beggar would need—a birth from above.

6. The New Birth Humiliates Human Pride and Glorifies Divine Grace

One reason men resist the doctrine so fiercely is that it humbles them beyond recovery. A man can still boast in a reform he achieved, a discipline he maintained, a sacrifice he made, a church he joined, a ritual he completed, or a moral standard he upheld. But he cannot boast about being born. Nobody congratulates himself for his own birth as though he arranged it. Birth is received, not accomplished. That is why the language of the new birth is so deadly to pride. It removes the sinner from the driver’s seat and leaves him dependent on the action of Another. John says those who receive Christ are born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). There goes pedigree. There goes effort. There goes human administration. There goes every priest, pastor, parent, and institution that wants to claim control over the matter.

This is also why grace shines so brightly in the doctrine. If a man must be born again, then salvation is not self-rescue. It is divine mercy. It is God meeting a condition the sinner cannot reverse. Paul says, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:4-5). Notice the order. Dead in sins first. Quickened together with Christ second. God acts because man cannot. That does not erase responsibility to believe. The sinner must receive Christ. But even the life that enables him to stand in grace is rooted in God’s saving action, not man’s religious performance. The new birth is humiliating to pride precisely because it is magnificent in grace.

You can usually tell where a man stands on grace by how comfortable he is with the doctrine of the new birth. If he wants to preserve some role for flesh in making itself acceptable to God, he will always retreat from the radical language of John 3. He will redefine it, soften it, or bury it under ceremony. But if he has seen himself as God sees him—ruined in Adam, guilty in sin, spiritually dead apart from Christ—then the new birth is not offensive. It is glorious. It means God did not leave the sinner to his own devices. It means heaven had an answer for a problem earth could never solve. It means the Lord

Jesus Christ did not come merely to advise the lost but to save them. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Lost men do not need coaching. They need finding. Dead men do not need motivation. They need life.

7. The New Birth Is the Great Divide Between True Christianity and Religious Deception

By the time John 3 is finished, one truth stands over the whole passage like a thundercloud: the new birth is the dividing line. It is not one doctrine among many. It is the doctrine that determines whether the others belong to you at all. A man may debate ordinances, gifts, church polity, prophecy, and standards, but if he is not born again, he is discussing a kingdom he has not even seen. Christ did not tell Nicodemus he would struggle to grasp advanced theology without the new birth. He said he could not see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). That means the new birth is not icing on the cake of discipleship. It is the doorway into life itself. Without it, theology becomes theater, worship becomes performance, and religion becomes deception with a Bible vocabulary.

This is what gives the doctrine such searching power. It does not merely ask whether you attend. It asks whether you live. It does not merely ask whether you agree. It asks whether God has acted in you. It does not merely ask whether you admire Jesus. It asks whether you have received life through Him. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). There is no middle ground there. No life in church membership. No life in inherited tradition. No life in ecclesiastical loyalty. Life is in the Son, and access to that life is bound up with the new birth. That is why false religion always prefers ambiguity. It can survive in fog. It dies in the clear air of John 3.

So this series must begin with a warning as much as with a foundation. There are multitudes of religious people moving around with Christian language who have never faced the issue the way Nicodemus had to face it. They are decent, informed, opinionated, and engaged, but they have never dealt honestly with the necessity of regeneration. Some are trusting morality. Some are trusting baptism. Some are trusting their church background. Some are trusting a prayer repeated without understanding. Some are trusting movement, emotion, or religious activism. But Christ’s words still stand, unmoved by every age that tries to edit them: “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). That makes the doctrine the great divider between truth and deception, because the devil can counterfeit religion, but he cannot counterfeit the life of God in the soul of a man.

Conclusion

The opening lesson of this series is therefore as plain as the Lord made it the night He spoke to Nicodemus. The doctrine of the new birth is not a preacher’s favorite phrase, not a revival cliché, and not a denominational slogan. It came from Jesus Christ. He introduced

it, He defined it, and He declared it necessary. That alone ought to settle the matter for anyone who claims to honor His words. If the Lord said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3), then no church has the authority to downgrade that statement, no scholar has the brilliance to improve it, and no sinner has the liberty to ignore it. Heaven has already spoken. The only question left is whether a man will bow to what was said.

Nicodemus stands in the passage as a witness against all religious confidence. He was moral, educated, respected, scripturally informed, and publicly devout, yet Christ addressed him as a man who lacked the one thing necessary for entrance into the kingdom. That ought to shake every reader who has leaned on outward religion. It ought to shake the moral man, the church man, the traditional man, the doctrinal man, and the scholarly man. It ought to shake anyone who has confused familiarity with truth for possession of life. If Nicodemus needed to be born again, then the issue is not how religious you look compared with the worst men in town. The issue is whether God has performed in you that supernatural work which flesh cannot produce and ceremony cannot imitate.

And that is why this subject must govern the whole series. The new birth is not optional, not secondary, and not a minor point for doctrinal hobbyists. It is the line between death and life, blindness and sight, profession and possession, heaven and hell. Everything else in Christian teaching rests on whether a man has crossed that line by the grace of God. So the message at the front door of the series must be the same message Christ gave at the front door of the kingdom: “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). Men may marvel. They may resist. They may mock. They may redefine. But they cannot change it. The kingdom of God does not swing open for the well-behaved flesh. It opens for those born from above.

2 of 10: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake – Why Religion Cannot Produce It

Introduction

There is a reason the doctrine of the new birth offends religious people more than it offends open sinners. The drunk in the gutter usually knows he is a wreck. The harlot on the corner usually knows she is dirty. The thief, the liar, the blasphemer, and the rebel may justify themselves for a while, but deep down they know there is rot in the walls. The religious man is different. He has spent years papering over the cracks. He has polished the outside, memorized the language, adopted the customs, learned the signals, and trained himself to

look acceptable in front of other people who are playing the same game. He has a church name, a denominational story, a family pedigree, a sacramental memory, and a shelf full of religious trophies. Then the Lord Jesus Christ steps in and says, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7), and in one stroke He tears the whole stage set down. Why. Because religion can decorate the tomb, but it cannot raise the dead man lying in it.

That is the thing men do not want to hear. They do not mind being told they need a little improvement. They can work with that. They do not mind being told to recommit, rededicate, realign, renew, or recalibrate. Those words leave the old man on the throne, giving him the dignity of participating in his own spiritual makeover. But the new birth destroys all that vanity. It says the problem is not that the sinner needs polishing. The problem is that he is dead. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Dead men do not need catechism. Dead men do not need ritual. Dead men do not need denominational identity. Dead men do not need moral coaching. They need life. They need resurrection. They need something no priest can administer, no church can manufacture, and no family can pass down through bloodline. They need God to do what only God can do.

That is why this essay must be sharp. Religion has been coddled long enough. Ceremony has been flattered long enough. Tradition has been treated like a sacred relic long enough. The Bible does not treat dead religion kindly because dead religion is one of the devil’s most effective counterfeits. It lets a man feel near God while remaining far from Him. It lets him rehearse truth without possessing it. It lets him talk about grace while trusting works, talk about Christ while leaning on ceremony, and talk about heaven while marching toward hell in polished shoes. The issue is not whether religion can restrain some outward behavior. It can. The issue is whether religion can produce spiritual life. It cannot. It never has. It never will. The new birth nobody can fake does not come from liturgy, ritual, discipline, or inherited church culture. It comes from above. “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13).

1. Religion Can Modify Conduct, But It Cannot Change Nature

One of the greatest lies ever sold to the human race is the idea that the old man can be trained into acceptability before God. That lie sits under nearly every religious system on earth. It may wear a Roman collar, a Protestant tie, a Mormon badge, a Buddhist robe, or a polished evangelical smile, but the lie is the same. It tells the sinner that if he can just behave well enough, submit thoroughly enough, conform long enough, and stay close enough to the machinery of religion, he can become the kind of person God accepts. But Jesus Christ never preached modification as the answer to corruption. He preached birth. He did not tell Nicodemus to improve his Phariseeism. He said, “Except a man be born

again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). That means the first birth left him in a condition that religion could not repair.

The reason is simple and brutal. Nature determines fruit. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). The Lord did not say flesh can become spirit if it attends the right classes. He did not say flesh can become spirit if it is sprinkled, dipped, confirmed, catechized, or ordained. Flesh remains flesh. You can civilize it, polish it, educate it, and restrain it, but you cannot transform it into spiritual life. “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). Notice Paul does not say no bad things dwell in his flesh alongside some good potential. He says no good thing. The flesh is not a rough draft of spirituality. It is a condemned nature. It is not sick and waiting for therapy. It is corrupt and waiting for burial.

That is why religious improvement is so deceptive. It can make the outside of a man look cleaner while leaving the inside untouched. A fellow can stop cursing, start wearing a tie, show up every Sunday, sing the hymns, quote the creed, and impress half the congregation, while still being just as lost as the day he started his program. The Lord said of the Pharisees, “Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones” (Matthew 23:27). There it is. Whited sepulchres. Religion knows how to paint graves. It does not know how to raise occupants. That requires resurrection life, and resurrection life does not come from self-discipline. It comes from God.

2. Ceremony Can Symbolize Truth, But It Cannot Create Truth

Now let us deal plainly with ceremony because it has damned multitudes. There is a place for symbols in Scripture. There are ordinances in the New Testament. There are outward actions that testify to inward realities. But the symbol is not the thing itself. Baptism is not regeneration. The Lord’s Supper is not salvation. Circumcision never produced holiness. Church membership never produced eternal life. Men are forever taking a sign that points to truth and then treating the sign as though it causes the truth. That is how dead religion survives. It takes what should testify and turns it into what people trust. The sinner then clings to the sign and misses the Saviour to whom the sign points.

The Bible destroys that confusion over and over again. “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh” (Romans 2:28). Paul did not say the outward sign had no place in its proper setting. He said it was never enough. He cuts straight to the core of the matter and says true reality is inward. In the same way, Peter, after mentioning baptism, immediately guards against the sacramental trap by saying, “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience

toward God” (1 Peter 3:21). Water can put away dirt from the skin. It cannot put away guilt from the soul. It can wet your body. It cannot regenerate your spirit. It can mark a testimony. It cannot create life.

This is where religious people become dangerous because they encourage sinners to rest in ceremonies they barely understand. A baby is sprinkled and everyone breathes easier, as though a few drops performed a miracle only God can do. A teenager goes through a catechism class, memorizes answers, and is pronounced spiritually settled. A man eats a wafer and drinks a cup and imagines grace is being transferred through his digestive tract. Another fellow gets dipped in water and thinks the baptism saved him because the preacher used the right words. That is madness dressed up in religion. If water could save, then plumbers would be apostles. If wafers could regenerate, then bakers would be high priests. If outward performance could produce inward life, then the cross of Christ was a needless spectacle. Ceremony can symbolize. It can never create. The moment you trust the symbol instead of the Saviour, the symbol becomes an idol.

3. Morality Can Impress Men, But It Cannot Justify Before God

There are countless men and women who think they are safe because they are decent. They are not perfect, of course, but they are decent. They work hard, pay bills, avoid scandal, stay out of jail, and compare favorably with the obvious reprobates of society. They may not be deeply devout, but they are “good people,” and that phrase has sent more souls to sleep on the edge of hell than many a false doctrine wrapped in theological jargon. The problem is not that morality has no social value. It certainly does. The problem is that morality cannot solve the sinner’s problem before a holy God. The issue is not whether you look respectable in a neighborhood. The issue is whether you can stand righteous before the Judge of all the earth. “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20).

Nicodemus was moral. That is the whole point. He was not being rebuked for living like a dog. He was being rebuked for trusting the wrong thing. He had morality without regeneration, and morality without regeneration is still lost. Paul, before conversion, could say concerning “the righteousness which is in the law,” that he was “blameless” (Philippians 3:6). Yet all of that had to be cast away as dung when he came to Christ (Philippians 3:8). Why. Because moral performance is not the same as the righteousness of God. A man may be cleaner than his neighbor and still be condemned. He may be admired in the community and still be unfit for the kingdom. He may never have wrecked his life publicly and still be spiritually dead. Morality can reduce scandal. It cannot produce life.

This is why religion often loves morality so much. Morality gives the old man something he can brag about. It lets him compare himself with others and come out feeling superior. Jesus shattered that game with one sentence in the Sermon on the Mount when He said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). That is God’s standard. Perfect. Not better than average. Not a decent church member. Not mostly faithful with a few stumbles. Perfect. The moment that standard is set, every moral boaster is exposed. He does not need polishing. He needs a new standing in Christ and a new birth by the Spirit. The law can show him he falls short. Religion can teach him to hide the evidence. But only God can save him.

4. Tradition Can Preserve Forms, But It Cannot Impart Life

Family religion is one of the strongest chains the devil ever wrapped around a soul. A man says, “Well, this is how I was raised.” Another says, “My parents were this, my grandparents were this, and we have always been this.” As though truth were inherited like a last name or salvation were passed down like land deeds. But the Bible says new birth is “not of blood” (John 1:13). That means your father’s religion cannot save you. Your mother’s devotion cannot save you. Your grandmother’s prayers cannot save you. Your family pew cannot save you. You may have a home saturated with religious memory and still die without life if you have never personally received Christ and been born of God.

The Jews in Christ’s day leaned heavily on ancestry. “We have Abraham to our father” (Matthew 3:9). John the Baptist blasted that refuge to pieces. He told them God could raise up children to Abraham from stones. The issue was not bloodline. The issue was repentance and reality. In the same way, millions today lean on church heritage. They were “raised in church,” “born into the faith,” “brought up around the things of God,” and therefore assume they belong. But being born in a garage does not make a man an automobile, and being born in a church family does not make a man regenerate. You can be raised in the choir loft and still be lost. You can grow up hearing Scripture and still be dead in sins. Familiarity with religious environment is not the new birth. It is only proximity to truth.

Tradition is especially dangerous because it can make falsehood feel holy. Men begin to treat inherited customs as if they carried divine power. They feel reverence when the music sounds familiar, when the liturgy follows the expected order, when the phrases of the old religion roll off the tongue, when the holidays come around, and when the family gathers in the same building generation after generation. None of that is wrong in itself if truth is present. But none of it can give life. The Lord rebuked men for “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). Tradition can preserve gestures long after reality is gone. It can keep the shell polished after the kernel is dead. It can maintain the museum

of religion while the life of God is absent from the place. The sinner must have more than inherited form. He must have life from above.

5. Outward Conformity Can Produce a Religious Mask, But Not a New Creature

There is a kind of religious manufacturing process that thrives on external conformity. Dress this way. Say these things. Avoid these places. Learn these phrases. Use this tone. Carry this Bible. Sit here. Stand there. Repeat after us. Show up enough times, and soon the fellow can blend into the crowd like a chameleon on a church pew. He knows when to say “amen.” He knows when to bow his head. He knows how to testify in the approved dialect. He knows how to speak of “being blessed” and “having peace” while his soul remains untouched. The danger is not that outward standards are always wrong. The danger is mistaking conformity for conversion. The Pharisees were masters of conformity, and Jesus called them “hypocrites” with enough force to shake the pillars.

The apostle Paul knew the difference because he had lived on both sides of it. Before salvation, he was a model of religious conformity. After salvation, he could say, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Notice the language. Not a newly managed old creature. Not a better-behaved old creature. A new creature. That is not produced by peer pressure, group expectations, or religious culture. It is produced by union with Christ. It is an inward reality that eventually expresses itself outwardly, but the order matters. First life, then fruit. First root, then growth. First new nature, then conduct shaped by that nature. Reverse the order and you get a performance. Keep the order biblical and you get Christian growth.

This is why some religious environments can mass-produce imitation Christians. The people know the code, but they do not know Christ. They know how to avoid visible scandal, but they do not know what it is to hate sin because God has changed their inward man. They know how to fit in, but they do not know what it is to be quickened from death unto life. That kind of outward conformity can actually make a sinner harder to reach because it gives him false assurance. He thinks, Surely I am safe. I look like these people. I talk like these people. I do what these people do. But God is not fooled by a costume. “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). A religious mask may impress a church committee. It does not impress heaven.

6. Dead Religion Substitutes Form for Power

One of the most frightening descriptions in all of Scripture is found in Paul’s words about the last days: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5). That is dead religion in one sentence. Form without power. Shape without substance. Vocabulary without life. Gesture without reality. The terrible thing about form is that it often

looks close enough to deceive the casual observer. The man with a form of godliness may carry a Bible, quote verses, attend services, sing hymns, and speak respectfully of spiritual matters. What he lacks is the power of God in salvation. He has not been born again. He has not passed from death unto life. He has not been made a partaker of divine life through Jesus Christ. So what he possesses is not Christianity in power but Christianity in costume.

You can see this all through the Gospels. The Pharisees loved seats, titles, greetings, robes, and public admiration. They tithed mint and anise and cummin while neglecting judgment, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23). Their religion was detailed, structured, disciplined, and empty. Christ did not commend them for trying hard. He denounced them because dead form is not harmless. It blinds men. It gives them the illusion of safety while leaving them under wrath. That is why religion can be more dangerous than open wickedness. Open wickedness often stinks badly enough to awaken suspicion. Dead religion smells like incense and respectability. It embalms men quietly. They die surrounded by sacred language and never once realize they lacked the life of God.

The power religion denies is not emotional excitement or spectacular signs. The power is the power of God unto salvation. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). That power is what quickens the dead sinner, convicts the heart, applies truth, and brings a man into living union with Christ. Dead religion can imitate emotion. It can organize programs. It can collect members. It can build institutions. It can preserve habits. But it cannot save. It cannot regenerate. It cannot impart eternal life. The new birth nobody can fake is a work of God’s power, and any religion that substitutes form for that power is a polished fraud.

7. Only God Can Give the New Birth

After stripping away all the false refuges, the soul is finally brought to the only hopeful place it can stand—the place where it quits looking to religion and looks to God. That is exactly where the sinner must come. The new birth is not produced by the will of the flesh or the will of man, “but of God” (John 1:13). That phrase destroys priestcraft, sacramentalism, family religion, and self-reformation in one blow. The birth is of God. That means He is the source. He is the giver. He is the author. He is the One who takes the sinner who can do nothing for himself and imparts life by His own power through the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a religious assembly line. It is a divine miracle.

This is why the Word of God is central. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth” (James 1:18). “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). The incorruptible seed is not church tradition. It is not the family name. It is not the catechism booklet. It is not the denominational certificate. It is the Word of

God, applied by the Spirit of God, centering the sinner on the Son of God. That is why preaching matters. That is why gospel witness matters. That is why truth matters. Men are not born again by atmosphere. They are born again through divine truth received in faith. Religion may cloud that truth, replace it, ritualize it, or bury it under ornament, but only God's truth can beget life.

And because the birth is of God, all the glory for it belongs to God. That is what religion cannot tolerate. Religion wants a piece of the credit. It wants to say the church dispensed grace, the priest mediated life, the family secured the outcome, the discipline earned the standing, or the ordinance completed the process. Grace will not allow it. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). There is the whole matter. Mercy saved us. Regeneration washed us. The Holy Ghost renewed us. Christ purchased it. God applied it. The sinner receives it. Religion cannot produce it because religion was never designed to raise the dead. Only God can do that, and He does it in the new birth.

Conclusion

So let the matter stand where Scripture leaves it. Religion can educate the mind, restrain behavior, preserve ceremony, organize institutions, and transmit traditions, but it cannot produce life. It can paint the sepulchre, but it cannot empty it. It can wash the skin, but it cannot cleanse the conscience. It can train the tongue, but it cannot change the nature. It can make a man look solemn, respectable, and deeply spiritual to other men while he remains just as dead in trespasses and sins as the day he was born. That is why the Lord never offered religion as the answer. He offered Himself, and He declared the necessity of the new birth. "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). That sentence still stands like a flaming sword in front of every religious refuge built by human pride.

If a man is trusting baptism, he is trusting the wrong thing. If he is trusting church attendance, he is trusting the wrong thing. If he is trusting catechism, family background, moral cleanliness, denominational loyalty, or outward conformity, he is trusting the wrong thing. None of those things can resurrect the dead spirit. None of them can justify the sinner before God. None of them can place a man in Christ. None of them can impart eternal life. The most terrifying thing about false religion is not that it looks ugly. It often looks beautiful. That is precisely the danger. It offers comfort without conversion, assurance without life, and sacred form without spiritual reality. It is a velvet-lined coffin.

But there is glorious news for the sinner who sees through the fraud. The God who refuses man's religious substitutes is the same God who freely gives life through His Son. He is not asking the sinner to perform a miracle on himself. He is commanding him to abandon his

false confidence and come to Christ for what only Christ can give. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12). There is the answer. Not ceremony but Christ. Not religion but regeneration. Not outward reform but inward life. The new birth nobody can fake is not produced by churches, families, priests, or rituals. It is given by God to the man who comes empty-handed to the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is both the most terrifying truth religion ever heard and the most glorious truth a sinner will ever need.

3 of 10: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake – That Which Is Born of the Flesh Is Flesh

Introduction

One of the most devastating statements ever spoken to religious humanity came from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ in the middle of His conversation with Nicodemus: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). That sentence is not merely a doctrinal observation. It is a divine deathblow to every system on earth that flatters fallen man. It cuts the legs out from under religion, philosophy, psychology, self-improvement, moral reform, sacramentalism, and every other human invention that keeps promising the old man he can rise above his ruin if he just gets the right method, discipline, treatment, or ritual. Christ did not say the flesh can become spiritual if properly educated. He did not say flesh can become holy if carefully restrained. He did not say flesh can become fit for heaven if it joins a church, takes a sacrament, says a prayer, or cleans up its public image. He said flesh is flesh. That means it remains what it is by nature. It does not evolve into spirit. It does not mature into life. It does not climb its way out of Adam.

That is why the new birth is necessary, and that is why man hates it. Fallen humanity will tolerate almost any doctrine as long as that doctrine leaves room for human contribution. Man likes systems that let him keep one hand on the steering wheel. He likes to think he can improve himself, correct himself, train himself, medicate himself, counsel himself, discipline himself, or ritualize himself into acceptability before God. If you tell him he needs guidance, he will listen. If you tell him he needs motivation, he will take notes. If you tell him he needs accountability, he may even sign up for a class. But if you tell him what Jesus told Nicodemus—that what came out of Adam is so corrupt that it must be superseded by a birth from above—then you have touched the nerve of human pride. The sinner can tolerate criticism of his habits more easily than he can tolerate condemnation of his nature.

Yet Christ goes straight to nature. He says the problem is not merely what man does. The problem is what man is.

That is the burden of this essay. The flesh never becomes spiritual. Fallen Adamic nature remains fallen whether it is drunk or sober, vulgar or polished, ignorant or educated, loose or disciplined, worldly or religious. That which is born physically remains tied to Adam's ruined line and inherits Adam's corruption. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12). Men do not like that because they prefer systems that make them feel repairable from within. But God has already passed sentence on the flesh. He does not rehabilitate it. He condemns it. He does not refine Adam. He replaces Adam with Christ in the work of salvation. He does not patch the old man up. He crucifies him. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him" (Romans 6:6). So if a man is ever to see the kingdom of God, the answer will not come from psychology, ritual, moral resolve, or positive thinking. It will come from the Spirit of God giving life where there was only flesh.

1. Christ Drew an Absolute Line Between Flesh and Spirit

When Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6), He was not speaking in vague devotional poetry. He was drawing an absolute line. Flesh and Spirit are not stages of the same process. They are not two points on a ladder. They are not lower and higher versions of the same life. They are distinct in source, distinct in nature, and distinct in outcome. What is born of the flesh takes its character from the flesh. What is born of the Spirit takes its character from the Spirit. Christ is telling Nicodemus that his first birth, whatever else it gave him, did not give him spiritual life. It gave him fleshly existence. It put him in Adam's line. It gave him human nature, but it did not fit him for the kingdom of God.

That destroys the modern religious habit of blurring all distinctions. The common line today is that everyone is "spiritual in their own way," and that man only needs help getting in touch with the deeper part of himself. But Jesus never said Nicodemus needed to discover his inner spiritual potential. He said he must be born again. That means no amount of digging around in the old man will uncover divine life. Flesh is flesh all the way down. It may produce emotion, sentiment, sincerity, excitement, tradition, and even a certain kind of reverence, but none of that is spiritual life. A man can cry in a church service and still be lost. He can feel moved by religious music and still be lost. He can admire Jesus, speak respectfully of God, and read devotional literature and still be lost. Why. Because flesh can feel many things without ever becoming spirit.

This is also why there is such a war in preaching over clarity. Once you maintain the line Christ drew, you cannot keep flattering the old man. You have to tell the truth. You have to

tell the respectable sinner that his first birth left him short of the kingdom. You have to tell the moral church member that flesh dressed in religion is still flesh. You have to tell the sacramentalist that water cannot transform nature. You have to tell the self-help addict that a better-managed Adam is still Adam. The whole point of John 3:6 is that source determines nature. The flesh can never generate what only the Spirit can give. That is why Christ's words are so hated. They cut across every religious fantasy men use to avoid total dependence on God.

2. The Flesh Inherits Adam's Ruin and Cannot Escape It

One of the most offensive truths in Scripture is that every human being is born into Adam's condition. Men do not start neutral and drift wrong. They start wrong because of what they are by birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6), and that flesh is connected to Adam, not innocence. Paul says, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12). He goes on to say, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Romans 5:19). That means man's problem is not merely imitation. It is inheritance. A child does not become a sinner only after he reaches some dramatic public rebellion. He is born in a fallen condition, and that fallen condition manifests itself because it is already there. David said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). He was not blaming his mother. He was acknowledging the corruption of the line.

That truth is humiliating because it eliminates the myth of innate human goodness. Modern culture runs on the idea that man is basically good and only needs better environments, better education, better opportunity, better therapy, or better social structures. But the Bible says the problem is deeper than environment. It goes into the bloodline of Adam. Men bring corruption into every environment they enter because corruption is in them. That is why Eden itself did not fix Adam. He fell in paradise. That is why the law did not fix Israel. It exposed the problem but did not cure it. That is why civilization cannot save man. Civilization merely gives him better tools with which to express the same corruption. Put a savage in a jungle, and he sins with primitive means. Put a professor in a laboratory, and he sins with advanced means. The equipment changes. The nature does not.

This is the point human religion never wants to concede. If man is truly ruined in Adam, then the answer cannot be drawn out of Adam. It cannot come from inside the old stock. It must come from outside, from above, from God. That is why Scripture contrasts Adam and Christ so sharply. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Notice there is no middle ground. In Adam, death. In Christ, life. The flesh is tied to the first man and carries his ruin. Spirit-born life is tied to the second man, "the Lord from heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:47). Until a man understands the depth of

Adam's fall, he will always toy with the idea that the flesh can be upgraded. But once he sees how far the corruption reaches, he understands why Christ did not preach improvement. He preached new birth.

3. Education and Restraint Do Not Spiritualize the Flesh

Now there is nothing wrong with education in its place. There is nothing wrong with discipline in its place. There is nothing wrong with teaching people manners, boundaries, and self-control. Civil order matters. Families should teach children. Churches should teach doctrine. Men should learn how to govern their conduct. But none of those things can spiritualize the flesh. A sinner with good manners is still a sinner. A lost man with theological vocabulary is still lost. A disciplined unbeliever is still an unbeliever. Men often confuse restraint with regeneration because they judge by appearance, but God judges by nature. You can take a wild sinner and train him into outward respectability without ever giving him life from above.

Nicodemus proves that. He was educated. He was disciplined. He was deeply familiar with Scripture. He was not some street fool stumbling into the presence of Christ half-conscious and morally ruined in the obvious outward sense. He was refined, serious, and restrained. Yet Jesus did not pat him on the back for how far he had come. He told him he lacked the essential thing. "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). That one sentence proves that education cannot bridge the gap between flesh and spirit. In fact, education can make the flesh more dangerous because it gives the sinner tools to defend himself against the truth. A clever lost man can argue beautifully while heading for hell. An educated Pharisee can quote the Book he refuses to obey. A trained theologian can explain regeneration without ever having experienced it.

The flesh can also be restrained without being transformed. Romans 7:18 says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." That is not the testimony of a drunk under no restraint. That is the testimony of the apostle Paul after salvation, speaking about the nature of the flesh itself. If no good thing dwells there, then discipline cannot change its essence. You can keep the flesh on a shorter leash. You cannot turn it into spirit. You can train a wolf not to lunge at supper time in front of company, but you have not turned him into a lamb. You have merely managed his behavior. That is what much religion does. It teaches sinners how to act tame in public and then calls the result holiness. God calls it flesh.

4. Human Religion Keeps Trying to Repair What God Already Condemned

One reason all man-made religion eventually becomes absurd is that it keeps trying to fix what God has already sentenced. God did not announce a self-improvement plan for the

flesh. He pronounced judgment on it. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8). Not they might struggle to please God. Not they need some ceremonial help to please God. They cannot please God. That is the verdict. And when God’s law met the flesh, it did not heal it. It exposed it. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh” (Romans 8:3). The weakness was not in the law. The weakness was in the flesh. The flesh cannot answer the law’s righteous demands because it is corrupted at the root.

But religion keeps trying. One system says take the sacraments and grace will be infused into the old nature. Another says work the disciplines and the carnal self will be refined into spiritual maturity. Another says keep the ordinances and the flesh will become acceptable through covenant faithfulness. Another says discover your true self and heal your inner wounds and you will become what you were meant to be. All of them share the same fatal error. They assume the answer lies in repairing the old man. But God has no repair program for Adam. He has a crucifixion for Adam and a resurrection life in Christ for the believer. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him” (Romans 6:6). God does not renovate the condemned house. He demolishes it and lays a new foundation in His Son.

This is why the gospel is so offensive to religious pride. It tells the religious man that all his effort has been invested in a corpse. He has been combing the hair of the dead, powdering the face of the dead, straightening the tie of the dead, and writing seminary papers for the dead. He has been trying to make a dead thing look usable to God. But God does not need a better version of the old life. He gives a new life. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). That does not mean a better-managed old creature. It means something new. That is the one thing religion cannot tolerate because it takes the work out of man’s hands and places it wholly in God’s.

5. Psychology and Self-Help Flatter the Old Man Instead of Judging Him

Now let us come down hard where the age deserves it. Modern psychology, self-help philosophy, and therapeutic religion are largely united in one grand deception: they tell man the answer is within. They tell him he must learn to reframe, recover, reclaim, regulate, rediscover, and rebuild himself. They speak endlessly of wounds, patterns, habits, needs, triggers, and inner narratives, but they almost never speak as the Bible speaks about sin, corruption, judgment, and the need for supernatural life. That is because the whole system is built to flatter the old man while appearing compassionate. It says you are damaged rather than dead, hindered rather than condemned, wounded rather than sinful, and in need of techniques rather than a new birth. That is not biblical truth. That is baptized humanism.

The Bible certainly recognizes sorrow, pain, grief, fear, oppression, and the complexities of the human heart. But it never presents fallen man as his own solution. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). That does not sound like a verse from the self-esteem movement. It sounds like God pulling the rug out from under every inward-looking system that says the sinner needs to trust himself more deeply. Scripture does not direct the sinner inward for salvation. It directs him outward to Christ and upward to God. The flesh does not contain hidden spiritual resources waiting to be unlocked. It contains corruption waiting to express itself unless restrained by grace and transformed by new birth.

Self-help religion is especially deceptive because it borrows Christian language while denying Christian truth. It speaks of healing but not repentance. It speaks of freedom but not redemption. It speaks of growth but not regeneration. It speaks of identity but not being in Christ. It speaks of purpose but not the cross. It speaks of transformation while never admitting that the old man is beyond self-repair. That kind of language is soothing to the flesh because it lets a sinner feel spiritual while remaining firmly in control of the process. But Jesus never handed Nicodemus a workbook and said, “Here are ten steps to unlock your inner kingdom potential.” He said, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). That is far more drastic, far more offensive, and far more glorious than anything the self-help world can offer.

6. The Kingdom Cannot Be Inherited by Flesh

The reason all of this matters is not merely because it affects theology in the abstract. It matters because flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Paul states it plainly: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). That means the issue is eternal. This is not a debate over whose religious system produces better citizens. It is a matter of whether a man is fit for heaven. The flesh, however adorned, cannot enter. It may be cultured enough to sit in a sanctuary, but it is not holy enough to stand in God’s presence. It may be decent enough to impress neighbors, but it is not righteous enough for the kingdom. Flesh and blood cannot inherit. That settles the matter.

This is why all human religion eventually fails at the point of death. It can accompany a man to the graveside with chants, candles, rituals, and assurances, but it cannot carry his soul into glory unless he has been born of God. The first birth gives him flesh and blood. The second birth gives him life from above. The first birth ties him to Adam and corruption. The second birth ties him to Christ and eternal life. Men may not like that distinction because it ruins all sentimental universalism, but sentiment will not open heaven. Jesus said, “Except

a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Not might have trouble seeing it. Cannot see it. That is absolute.

This truth also guards against false assurance in church culture. A man can be active, admired, and even doctrinally articulate while still resting in the flesh. He may say the right things and reject the obvious heresies, yet never have dealt honestly with the fact that his first birth left him incapable of entering the kingdom. He may think because he is not “like the world” that he must therefore belong to God. But the issue is not whether he compares well with the world. The issue is whether he has the life of Christ. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). The kingdom belongs to those born from above, not merely those better behaved below.

7. Only the Spirit of God Can Produce Spiritual Life

After Christ destroys every illusion about the flesh, He leaves the sinner in the only place where hope can truly begin. If the flesh is flesh and cannot become spirit, then the answer must come from the Spirit of God. That is precisely what Jesus says. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Spiritual life originates with the Spirit. It does not bubble up out of Adam’s resources. It is not manufactured by church machinery. It is not inherited by bloodline. It is not conferred by ceremony. It is born of the Spirit. That means regeneration is a divine act, supernatural in origin, powerful in effect, and impossible for man to counterfeit at the level of reality, even if he can imitate some of the outward forms.

This is why the Word of God is indispensable. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth” (James 1:18). “Being born again... by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). The Spirit of God uses the truth of God to bring life where there was only death. He does not improve the flesh. He begets life in the believer. That is why Christ’s words to Nicodemus were not softer but sharper. The sharper the truth, the more clearly the sinner sees that his hope lies not in inner reform but in divine intervention. The preacher’s job is not to flatter the old man into trying harder. It is to preach the truth plainly enough that the sinner sees the bankruptcy of his flesh and the necessity of God’s saving work in Christ.

And when that work is done, something genuinely new is present. The believer is not merely a slightly better version of the old self. He is a man in whom the Spirit of God has produced life. That life then wars against the flesh, yes, but it is real life all the same. It loves truth. It recognizes Christ. It responds to Scripture. It grieves over sin. It desires righteousness. Those things may begin in weakness, and the believer may have much to learn, but the source is no longer Adam alone. The Spirit has brought forth something the flesh could never create. That is why the new birth nobody can fake is such a glorious doctrine. It takes

salvation out of man's hands and places it where it belongs—in the mighty, sovereign, life-giving work of God.

Conclusion

The Lord's statement in John 3:6 leaves no room for human optimism about the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Not potentially spirit. Not partly spirit. Not almost fit for the kingdom with enough help. Flesh. That means Adam's line remains Adam's line. Fallen nature remains fallen nature. The old man remains beyond self-redemption. Education cannot save it. religion cannot sanctify it. psychology cannot heal it into life. self-help cannot upgrade it into righteousness. ceremony cannot wash it into heaven. God has already judged the flesh, and no amount of human sincerity can reverse that verdict. The sinner's problem is far deeper than a bad habit, a weak environment, or a poor self-image. His problem is nature.

That is why every system that flatters the old man is ultimately cruel. It promises him hope where none exists. It tells him to work on the wrong life. It encourages him to trust the very flesh God has condemned. Whether the flattery comes dressed in ancient ceremony, modern therapy, polished religion, or positive thinking, it is still the same lie from Eden: that man can become by his own inward resources what God requires. But Christ did not point Nicodemus inward. He pointed him to the necessity of birth from above. He did not prescribe refinement of the flesh. He announced the insufficiency of the flesh. And in doing so, He stripped away every false refuge so the sinner would have nowhere to look but to God.

That is the glory of the matter. The same verse that condemns the flesh also points beyond it. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). There is God's answer. Not Adam improved, but life imparted. Not flesh polished, but spirit born. Not religion produced, but God given. So the man who has finally learned to distrust the flesh is not at the end of hope. He is at the beginning of grace. When he stops trying to fix what God has condemned, he is ready to receive what God alone can give. And that is the whole point. The new birth nobody can fake does not come from within the old man. It comes from above, from the Spirit, through the Word, by faith in Jesus Christ.

4 of 10: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake – Born by the Word of God

Introduction

One of the most neglected truths in this soft, sentimental, entertainment-drunk church age is that the new birth is tied to the Word of God. Men are forever trying to separate what God joined together. They want salvation without Scripture, spirituality without doctrine, conversion without truth, experience without revelation, and church growth without preaching. They want an atmosphere. They want a mood. They want a moving song, a dim light, a trembling voice, a polished testimony, and a well-timed invitation. They want the sinner stirred without ever being pierced, soothed without ever being exposed, and impressed without ever being confronted by what God actually said. But the Bible does not teach that a man is born again by ambiance. It teaches that he is born again by the incorruptible seed of the Word of God. Peter said, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23). That is not secondary. That is foundational. The birth is tied to the seed, and the seed is the Word of God.

That is why the devil hates the Book with a fury that ought to tell any honest reader exactly where the battle is. He does not mind religion as long as it is severed from truth. He does not mind church if church is reduced to ceremony, therapy, social identity, emotionalism, or entertainment. He can work with all of that. He can sit in the choir loft, the boardroom, the seminary, the pulpit, and the pew if the Word of God is buried under tradition, diluted by corruption, or treated like one inspirational voice among many. What he cannot tolerate is a man taking the living words of God seriously enough to preach them plainly and trust them to do what no human technique can do. The Word of God does not merely inform the mind. It carries divine seed. It does not merely decorate theology. It is the instrument through which God begets life. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). That means if the truth is removed, the birth is clouded. If the gospel is replaced, the seed is replaced. If the Book is corrupted, the light is dimmed where men are trying to find life.

That is what this essay must drive home. Men are not born again by family tradition, moral training, emotional pressure, religious atmosphere, denominational loyalty, or institutional authority. They are born again through the Word of God as the Spirit of God applies it to the heart of a sinner who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. That makes preaching weighty. That makes truth weighty. That makes Scripture central. The birth nobody can fake is inseparable from the words God has spoken, because God chose to put life in the seed of His own truth. A sinner may hear singing and remain dead. He may watch a ritual and remain dead. He may admire a church and remain dead. But when the incorruptible seed of the Word is planted and the Spirit of God quickens it in the heart, life begins where there was only death. That is why preaching matters more than production, doctrine matters more than mood, and the Book matters more than the building.

1. The New Birth Comes by Seed, and the Seed Is the Word of God

The first thing to settle is that God Himself chose the language of seed to explain the new birth. Peter said, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). That is not a poetic flourish. It is a doctrinal statement. A birth requires seed, and spiritual birth requires spiritual seed. The seed that produces the new birth is not church membership, family reputation, positive thinking, emotional sincerity, or ceremonial religion. It is the Word of God. That means God did not leave regeneration hanging in a mist of vague spirituality. He tied it to revealed truth. He attached life to His own words. He put the issue squarely in the realm of what He has spoken, not what man has imagined.

The contrast Peter makes is crucial. “Not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.” Corruptible seed belongs to the natural order. It dies, decays, weakens, and passes away. That is the whole world system. Human opinion is corruptible. Human tradition is corruptible. Human philosophy is corruptible. Church trends are corruptible. Emotional experiences are corruptible. Denominational slogans are corruptible. None of them carry the incorruptible life of God. But the Word of God “liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). That means the seed tied to it is not fragile, not temporary, not dependent on human maintenance, and not subject to the decay of passing religious fashion. God linked eternal life to an incorruptible instrument because He intended the new birth to rest on something as stable and abiding as He is.

That is why the Lord Jesus used agricultural language in His own teaching. In the parable of the sower, He said, “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). There it is in plain speech. Not the music is the seed. Not the atmosphere is the seed. Not the charisma of the preacher is the seed. Not the emotional surge in the room is the seed. The seed is the word of God. You can gather a crowd with many things. You can manipulate feelings with many things. You can build a religious movement with many things. But if the seed is absent, the birth is absent. Life comes by that incorruptible seed when God applies it in power.

2. God Begets by the Word of Truth, Not by Religious Atmosphere

James says the same thing from another angle: “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth” (James 1:18). Notice how much is packed into that one statement. First, the origin is in God’s will. “Of his own will.” Second, the action is divine begetting. “Begot he us.” Third, the instrument is doctrinally precise. “With the word of truth.” That means the new birth is not some mystical event floating free from content. It is not a nameless religious sensation. It is not a vague spiritual awakening triggered by enough emotional intensity. It is God bringing life through truth. He does not beget with confusion. He begets with truth. He

does not regenerate by sentimentality. He regenerates by truth. He does not save men with sacred fog. He saves them by the word of truth.

That cuts across the grain of modern religion because modern religion loves atmosphere. It loves the swelling music, the trembling moment, the tearful room, the emotionally charged invitation, the carefully staged environment where people are softened by feeling but never confronted by content. None of those things may be wrong in themselves if truth is present and primary, but they become dangerous the moment they are treated as substitutes for the Word. A man can be moved by a song and remain unregenerate. He can be impressed by a building and remain dead in sins. He can feel solemn during a ritual and remain unsaved. He can even cry under conviction-like emotion and still miss the new birth if the truth of the gospel has not taken root in his heart. God does not beget by atmosphere. He begets by the word of truth.

This is why some people have a religious experience and yet show no lasting evidence of life. They were worked on emotionally, not born again scripturally. They were drawn into a moment, not grounded in truth. They responded to pressure, personality, repetition, or crowd energy, but the incorruptible seed never took hold. That is why preaching must not be replaced by performance. Paul said, “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). Not by the cleverness of programming. Not by the artistry of the production. Not by the emotional architecture of the event. By preaching. God tied saving power to declared truth because He intends the sinner to be born through what He has said, not through what man can stage.

3. The Spirit of God Uses the Word of God to Produce Life

Now let us be clear. The Word of God is not a dead object used mechanically. The new birth is not caused by merely hearing sounds. The Spirit of God must apply the Word. But the Spirit does not bypass the Word when He does His work. He works through it. Jesus said, “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6), and Peter says that birth is “by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). Those truths are not in competition. The Spirit is the begetter, and the Word is the seed He uses. That is why Scripture repeatedly links the Spirit and the Word together instead of setting them against each other. The sword of the Spirit is “the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). The Spirit takes divine truth and drives it into the heart with conviction, illumination, and life-giving power.

This also protects us from two opposite errors. One error is dead formalism, where men think that merely reciting Scripture automatically regenerates anyone who hears it regardless of faith or the Spirit’s work. The other error is mystical anti-intellectualism, where men speak as though the Spirit works independently of truth, content, and doctrine.

Both are wrong. God does not save apart from the truth He revealed, and the truth does not save apart from the Spirit who quickens it. Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). That statement joins what so many have torn apart. Christ’s words are not empty data. They are life-bearing because the Spirit of God is bound up with them in divine power.

This is why a preacher’s confidence must never be in his own ability to “make something happen.” His confidence must be in the Spirit of God working through the Word of God. A man can tell stories, crack jokes, manipulate tone, build suspense, and create a moment, but only God can raise the dead. And God chose to do that through His Word. Paul told the Thessalonians they received the message “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” which “effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). There is the secret. The Word effectually works in those who believe because the Spirit of God animates His own truth. That is why the preacher must preach the Book and trust the Holy Ghost, not crowd psychology and gimmicks.

4. If You Corrupt the Book, You Cloud the Birth

Here is where the matter gets sharp. If the new birth comes by the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, then any corruption of that seed is no small issue. Men like to talk as though Bible corruption is a minor academic debate for scholars with spectacles and footnotes. But if the Word is the seed, then the purity of the seed matters. Nobody in his right mind would shrug over corrupted seed in a natural field and then pretend the spiritual field can afford impurity. If a farmer plants rotten seed, he will not get the crop he expected. If a preacher handles corrupted doctrine, trimmed-down gospel language, and muddled revelation, he should not be shocked when the results are confusion, false assurance, and shallow profession.

Peter’s language is exact: “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible” (1 Peter 1:23). The Word of God as God gave it is pure. “The words of the LORD are pure words” (Psalm 12:6). “Every word of God is pure” (Proverbs 30:5). When men start treating those words as negotiable, expendable, or endlessly adjustable by scholarly reconstruction, they are not playing with harmless preferences. They are handling the seedbed of regeneration. The devil understands this better than many preachers do. He knows if he can cloud the words, he can cloud the truth. If he can cloud the truth, he can confuse the sinner. If he can confuse the sinner, he can keep the birth obscured behind religious language. He does not have to abolish Christianity outright. He only has to cloud the seed enough that men begin to trust experiences detached from doctrinal clarity.

This is also why gospel corruption is so deadly. Paul warned of “another gospel” (Galatians 1:6), and he did not treat the matter lightly. He pronounced a curse on any man or angel who preached a perverted gospel (Galatians 1:8-9). Why such severity. Because corrupt the gospel and you corrupt the message through which God brings life. Remove Christ’s blood atonement, His deity, His resurrection, His finished work, or the necessity of faith in Him, and you have not simply rearranged theological furniture. You have tampered with the seed. You have substituted poison for bread. You have offered religious language without regenerating power. That is why the war over the Book is so fierce. It is not merely about wording in the abstract. It is about the clarity of the truth through which men are born again.

5. Family Upbringing, Institutional Authority, and Denominational Loyalty Cannot Produce the New Birth

Millions of people are leaning on things that never produced life in anyone. One leans on his family upbringing. Another leans on his church tradition. Another leans on institutional authority. Another leans on denominational identity. They all talk as though proximity to religion is the same as regeneration. But the Bible says the new birth is “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). “Not of blood” destroys family lineage as a saving cause. “Nor of the will of the flesh” destroys self-effort. “Nor of the will of man” destroys priestcraft, institutional control, and ecclesiastical administration. “But of God” settles the source once and for all.

A man may have been raised around the Bible from infancy and still need to be born again. Timothy had the Scriptures from childhood (2 Timothy 3:15), but even those Scriptures were said to be able to make him “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” The family environment was a blessing. It was not the new birth itself. The Word had to be believed. Christ had to be received. In the same way, no church can generate life by its mere existence. No council can vote a soul into regeneration. No denominational pedigree can transfer eternal life. You can sit under religious authority for forty years and die in your sins if the incorruptible seed has never been received in faith.

That should strip away a great deal of false confidence. A man says, “I was raised Baptist,” or “I was raised Catholic,” or “I’ve always been Pentecostal,” or “My family has gone to this church for generations.” Fine. What has that to do with the question Christ asked in John 3. Were you born again. Have you received the life of God through the truth of the gospel. Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. The issue is not whether the building has been in your family history. The issue is whether the incorruptible seed of God’s Word ever took root in your soul. Institutional loyalty may preserve identity. It cannot impart life. Only God can do that, and He does it by His Word.

6. Preaching Matters Because God Saves Through Declared Truth

This is where preachers need to wake up and quit apologizing for preaching. If men are born again by the Word of God, then preaching is not a filler between songs. It is not the boring middle section of a religious production. It is not the expendable part that has to be shortened to keep the crowd entertained. It is central. It is weighty. It is sacred because God has chosen to save through declared truth. Paul said, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). He did not say faith comes by being impressed. He did not say faith comes by feeling spiritual. He said hearing comes by the Word. That means the ears must encounter truth if faith is to arise in the biblical sense.

Paul also said, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). Notice the wording. It pleased God. Preaching is not merely a traditional method we happen to like. It is something that pleases God because it matches His own chosen means. The world calls it foolish because the world always despises what strips human pride of control. The world would much rather be saved by music, art, ritual, movement, therapy, social belonging, or mystical feeling. Those things leave room for human admiration. Preaching confronts the sinner with authority outside himself. It tells him what God said, what God requires, what Christ has done, and what must be believed. That is why the world calls it foolish. It is too direct.

This also explains why so much so-called Christian work produces so little depth. The Book has been sidelined. The pulpit has been emptied of doctrinal force. Men stand up and talk around Scripture, gesture at Scripture, joke around Scripture, and sentimentalize Scripture, but rarely preach it with the confidence that these are the words through which God saves sinners. You can gather people without preaching. You cannot regenerate them without the truth. You can build an audience with cleverness. You cannot create the new birth with cleverness. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God. That means the preacher who feeds men stories while starving them of the Book is not helping them. He is withholding the very seed God uses to bring life.

7. The Devil Wars Against Scripture Because He Knows the Word Produces Life

There is a reason every age sees a renewed attack on the Word of God. The devil is not stupid. He may be wicked, but he is not stupid. He knows the Word of God exposes lies, reveals Christ, convicts sinners, strengthens saints, and serves as the incorruptible seed in the new birth. So where does he attack. At the Book. He attacked it in Eden by questioning what God said. "Yea, hath God said?" (Genesis 3:1). He still attacks the same way. He clouds inspiration, mocks certainty, multiplies confusion, elevates human opinion, and

trains people to distrust the exact words of God. He knows if he can loosen men from Scripture, he can loosen them from the instrument God uses to bring life.

This warfare appears in many forms. Sometimes it appears as scholarly arrogance, where the authority of the text is quietly transferred from God to academic elites. Sometimes it appears as sentimental religion, where truth is treated as too harsh and must be softened to fit modern tastes. Sometimes it appears as charismatic confusion, where inward impressions are elevated above revealed words. Sometimes it appears as worldly pragmatism, where churches assume they need cultural marketing more than biblical preaching. Different costumes, same devil. The common thread is that the Word is displaced. Once that happens, the sinner is left with religious motion but no incorruptible seed.

That is why believers must love, defend, preach, and receive the Book with reverence. Not because we are bibliolaters, as fools like to say, but because God has tied life, light, faith, and growth to His revealed words. Jesus answered the devil, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4). The Psalmist said, "Thy word hath quickened me" (Psalm 119:50). Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them" (Jeremiah 15:16). The whole testimony of Scripture is that God works through what He has spoken. So when the church grows casual about the Book, it is not becoming mature. It is becoming vulnerable. And when the church recovers confidence in the Word, it is not becoming rigid. It is returning to the very means God ordained for life.

Conclusion

The new birth nobody can fake is not born out of atmosphere, heritage, ritual, sentiment, or religious pressure. It comes through the incorruptible seed of the Word of God. Peter said it plainly: "Being born again... by the word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). James said it plainly: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). Those statements settle the issue for any man willing to bow to Scripture. God does not beget by error. He begets by truth. He does not regenerate by religious machinery. He regenerates through His Word as the Spirit applies it in power. That means the Book is not ornamental to salvation. It is instrumental. The preacher who forgets that has lost the plot.

This truth also exposes the fraud of every substitute. Emotional manipulation cannot produce life. Musical environment cannot produce life. Family reputation cannot produce life. Denominational loyalty cannot produce life. Institutional authority cannot produce life. Corrupted gospels cannot produce life. Clouded revelation cannot produce life. You may gather religious interest with all of those things, but you will not get the new birth. Seedless religion can produce activity, membership, and even tears, but it cannot produce sons of

God. The sinner must be brought face to face with divine truth, with the gospel of Jesus Christ, with the Word that liveth and abideth for ever.

So the weight of the matter falls back where it belongs: preach the Book, believe the Book, guard the Book, and never apologize for the Book. The devil wars against Scripture because Scripture is where the seed is. The church must therefore hold fast to the words of God with the kind of trembling reverence that knows eternity hangs on them. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). If you remove the gospel, you remove the seed. If you cloud the truth, you cloud the birth. But if the incorruptible Word is preached and received in faith, the Spirit of God does what no human hand can do. He brings life out of death. That is why truth matters, why preaching matters, and why the new birth is inseparable from the Word of God.

5 of 10: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake – From Death Unto Life

Introduction

One of the greatest failures of modern preaching is that it has reduced salvation to something so small, so tame, so manageable, that the average churchgoer hardly knows whether he has experienced anything supernatural at all. Men now talk about "starting a faith journey," "making a spiritual decision," "improving their walk," "finding purpose," or "letting Jesus help them live better," as though the gospel were some heavenly coaching program for men who were already basically alive and only needed a nudge in the right direction. But the Bible never describes salvation that way. The Bible does not say the sinner is weak and needs strengthening. It does not say he is wandering and needs better directions. It does not say he is bruised and needs a little spiritual therapy. It says he is dead. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). That is not poetic exaggeration. That is divine diagnosis. The lost man is not spiritually sick. He is spiritually dead.

That changes everything. If a man is merely sick, then perhaps medicine will do. If he is merely confused, then perhaps education will do. If he is merely undisciplined, then perhaps training will do. If he is merely emotionally wounded, then perhaps counseling will do. But if he is dead, then none of those things can touch the real problem. Dead men do not need advice. Dead men do not need atmosphere. Dead men do not need motivation. Dead men need life. They need resurrection. They need a power outside themselves to do for them what they cannot do for themselves. That is why the new birth is such a miracle. It

is not God offering a better lifestyle to a morally struggling creature. It is God giving life to one who has none. It is not religious adjustment. It is resurrection in the inner man.

This is why the language of Scripture is so strong and why men keep trying to soften it. The devil does not mind religion as long as it keeps men from seeing the severity of their condition. He is perfectly content for a sinner to think of himself as flawed, searching, broken, or spiritually incomplete, because all of those labels still allow room for self-help. But once a man sees himself as God sees him—dead in trespasses and sins—then all boasting is over. He cannot fix death. He cannot manage death. He cannot train death. He cannot massage death into life. He must be quickened. He must be made alive. He must pass “from death unto life” (John 5:24). That is what this essay is about. The new birth nobody can fake is one of the greatest miracles God performs in time, because in one moment He changes a sinner’s eternal condition forever.

1. The Lost Man Is Not Sick but Dead

The first thing that must be established is the severity of the sinner’s condition. Paul does not leave the matter open to interpretation. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Notice he does not say nearly dead, mostly dead, weak, unstable, immature, or spiritually unwell. He says dead. That is the Holy Ghost’s word for the natural man’s condition before God. The sinner may be physically alive, mentally alert, emotionally active, professionally accomplished, and socially admired, but in the realm that matters most, he is dead. He has no spiritual life in union with God. He is disconnected, alienated, separated, and lifeless toward the things of God. Whatever activity he has in religion, morality, or spirituality is not the life of God in the soul.

That truth is offensive because men would rather hear anything else. Tell a sinner he is confused, and he will nod. Tell him he has made mistakes, and he may agree. Tell him he has wounds and baggage, and he will probably start talking. But tell him he is dead in trespasses and sins, and now you have hit the pride center. Now you have touched the place where the old man feels annihilated. Dead means helpless. Dead means unable. Dead means there is no inward spark waiting to ignite if only the right teacher comes along. Dead means the sinner has no life in himself capable of lifting him into God’s kingdom. That is why Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Dead men do not improve into sight. They must be given life.

This also exposes how shallow much so-called evangelism has become. Modern gospel presentations often sound like Jesus came to add enrichment to lives that were already basically functioning. He is presented as a helper for marriages, a comfort for stress, a guide for purpose, or a solution for personal emptiness. Now He certainly helps, comforts,

guides, and fills, but if that is all you say, you have not preached the gospel in biblical proportions. Christ did not come merely to improve lifestyles. He came to save the lost, raise the dead, and give eternal life. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Lost and dead. That is the condition. Until that is seen, the miracle of regeneration will never be appreciated.

2. Spiritual Death Means Total Inability Toward God

When the Bible says the sinner is dead, it means more than that he is religiously uninformed. It means he is incapable of producing spiritual life from within himself. A corpse cannot respond to instruction with life. You can preach at it, sing over it, encourage it, and surround it with beauty, but unless life is imparted from outside, it remains what it is. That is why the language of death is so devastating to all systems of self-salvation. If the sinner is dead, then the answer cannot lie in the sinner. The source of life must come from God. “But God, who is rich in mercy... even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:4-5). There is the whole issue. God acts because man cannot.

This is where the false optimism of religion and psychology collapses. Human systems assume that with enough information, enough support, enough training, enough ritual, enough structure, or enough inspiration, the sinner can become what God requires. But Scripture says otherwise. “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Romans 3:11). “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8). “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Those are statements of inability. Not difficulty. Not inconvenience. Inability. Dead men do not produce spiritual appetite, spiritual perception, or spiritual life by self-effort. They need God to intervene.

That is why salvation by grace is not merely a nicer system than salvation by works. It is the only possible system if the sinner is truly dead. Works assume life enough to earn standing. Grace comes because there is no such life. The sinner does not contribute resurrection power to his own salvation any more than Lazarus contributed life to his own grave. Christ stood before that tomb and cried, “Lazarus, come forth” (John 11:43). Life came by divine command and power. In the same way, the new birth is not man climbing toward God. It is God imparting life to the dead. Once that truth is grasped, all the glory for salvation belongs where it ought to belong—on the Lord.

3. The New Birth Is a Resurrection Miracle

The language of quickening in Scripture is resurrection language. “And you hath he quickened” (Ephesians 2:1). “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together

with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5). That means regeneration is not a tweak, an adjustment, or an upgrade. It is life given where death reigned. It is a miracle every bit as supernatural as any bodily raising in Scripture, only it takes place in the unseen realm of the inner man. Men may be more impressed by visible miracles because they can watch them with their natural eyes, but heaven knows that one of the greatest miracles in time is when a sinner passes from spiritual death into spiritual life through faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus stated this plainly in John 5:24: “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” Notice how immediate and absolute that is. “Hath everlasting life.” Present possession. “Shall not come into condemnation.” Future security. “Is passed from death unto life.” Completed transition. That is not a probationary arrangement. That is a miracle of transfer. A man does not gradually inch from death to life over years of religious effort. He passes from death unto life when he hears and believes. That is why the new birth is such a decisive event. The change it brings may begin invisibly, but it is real, instant, and eternal in its consequences.

This is where modern gospel reductionism has done terrible damage. By shrinking salvation down to a generic religious commitment, it has hidden the miracle. Men think they “became Christians” in the same way they joined a club or adopted a philosophy. They do not think in terms of resurrection, quickening, or translation into a new realm of life. But the Bible does. “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13). That is not a lifestyle enhancement. That is a kingdom transfer. That is a resurrection miracle. The sinner who sees this truth will never again speak of salvation as though it were a little emotional bump in the road of life.

4. From Death Unto Life Happens Through Christ’s Voice and Power

A dead sinner cannot raise himself, but Christ can raise the dead. That is one of the great themes of John’s Gospel. In John 5, the Lord ties His own life-giving authority to the issue of spiritual resurrection. “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will” (John 5:21). Later He says, “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25). That is not a reference merely to future bodily resurrection. The phrase “and now is” shows a present spiritual work. The spiritually dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and they live. There it is. Life comes through Christ’s own authority and power.

This is why the gospel must be Christ-centered and not merely moral. The sinner does not need a motivational message detached from the Lord Jesus Christ. He needs the voice of the Son of God in the gospel. He needs to hear what Christ has done, who Christ is, and

why Christ alone can save. If you reduce preaching to life tips, personal inspiration, or generalized spirituality, you are not setting men before the One who quickens the dead. You are merely giving better cemetery manners to corpses. The issue is not whether the sermon is pleasant. The issue is whether the dead are hearing the voice of the Son of God through the preached Word.

That is also why Christ's finished work is so central to regeneration. He can give life because He conquered death. He can quicken sinners because He Himself rose in triumph over the grave. Ephesians 2 ties our quickening directly to union with Him: "hath quickened us together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5). Salvation is not simply God deciding to overlook sin. It is God imparting life through the risen Christ to those who believe. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not merely a historical doctrine to be affirmed once a year on Easter. It is the living foundation of the believer's new life. He lives because Christ lives. The sinner is quickened because the risen Son gives life.

5. Regeneration Is Not Religious Adjustment but Eternal Transformation

One of the great dangers of our time is that men talk about conversion as though it were just one more stage of personal development. They speak of "becoming more spiritual," "starting over," "finding God," or "getting serious about faith," all of which may contain scraps of truth in the right setting, but none of them capture the force of the new birth. Regeneration is not an adjustment to religious priorities. It is not God helping a man become a slightly improved version of his old self. It is a change of life at the deepest level. The man who had no spiritual life now has it. The man who was dead now lives. The man who stood condemned now possesses eternal life.

That is why 2 Corinthians 5:17 speaks so strongly: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Not a better-managed old creature. Not a morally scrubbed old creature. A new creature. Something has happened that was not there before. This does not mean instant maturity or sinless perfection, but it does mean real life, real relation, and real union with Christ. It means the believer now possesses an inward principle of life that was absent before. That new life may begin like a newborn child—small, dependent, needing growth—but it is life all the same. No amount of religious habit can substitute for that reality.

This is why false converts are so tragic. Some have been adjusted religiously without ever being quickened spiritually. They have changed peer groups, vocabulary, habits, and weekly routines, but the life of God is still absent. They know the culture of Christianity without the miracle of Christianity. They have moved around in the nursery without ever having been born. That is why preaching must press beyond outward conformity to the

inward miracle. Men need more than a church version of self-improvement. They need life. They need to pass from death unto life. Anything less is a religious costume on a dead man.

6. The Greatness of Salvation Is Seen in the Greatness of the Power Required

If the sinner were only mildly damaged, salvation would require only mild help. But if he is dead, salvation requires divine power of the highest order. That is exactly how Paul speaks in Ephesians 1 and 2. In chapter 1 he magnifies “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (Ephesians 1:19), and he measures that power by the same power “which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead” (Ephesians 1:20). Then in chapter 2 he says we who were dead in sins have been quickened together with Christ. In other words, the power that raised Jesus Christ bodily is the same kind of divine power at work in the regeneration of a sinner. That ought to stop every trivial presentation of salvation cold in its tracks.

Men now talk about salvation as though it were a little decision made at the edge of a service while soft music plays and heads are bowed. But if Scripture is true, then what happens when a sinner is genuinely saved is one of the most stupendous acts of divine power in the human experience. God reaches into a life under condemnation, breaks the reign of death, imparts eternal life, joins that sinner to Christ, seals him by the Spirit, transfers him into a new kingdom, and changes his eternal destiny forever. That is not a sentimental religious moment. That is supernatural power. It may happen quietly in terms of external display, but it is thunderous in spiritual reality.

This is also why believers should never get over their salvation. If all Christ did was help you straighten your life out a little, then perhaps gratitude can cool off after a while. But if He raised you from spiritual death, rescued you from condemnation, and gave you everlasting life, then how do you ever get over that. How do you grow casual about being alive after once being dead. Paul never got over it. The saints in Scripture never got over it. The church at her best has never gotten over it. The problem with modern lukewarmness is not merely that people have bad priorities. It is that many have never really grasped what salvation is. They have shrunk it so small they cannot marvel at it anymore.

7. The Instant Change in Eternal Condition Shows the Magnitude of the Miracle

One of the glorious truths in John 5:24 is the immediacy of the change. “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.” Not will someday earn it if he stays faithful enough. Not may hope for it if the church confirms it. “Hath everlasting life.” Then Christ adds, “and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” That means the transition is immediate in its judicial and spiritual reality. A man may not understand everything at once. He may have much to learn. But the moment he

believes on Christ, he possesses everlasting life and is no longer under condemnation. The miracle takes effect instantly.

That is what makes regeneration so great. In one moment a man goes from condemned to justified, from dead to alive, from darkness to light, from wrath to grace, from outside Christ to in Christ. His standing changes. His destiny changes. His relationship to God changes. His eternal future changes. That is more than a mood change. That is more than emotional uplift. That is more than religious affiliation. It is a miracle of eternal consequence accomplished in time. No wonder the devil works so hard to keep men thinking of salvation in weak, vague, non-miraculous categories. If sinners ever saw what was really at stake, they would stop playing games with religion.

This truth also gives assurance to the believer. If the new birth is truly a passage from death unto life, then it is not a fragile feeling that comes and goes with mood. It is an accomplished fact grounded in Christ's word and work. A believer may battle doubts, fears, temptations, and spiritual dryness, but if he has believed on the Son, he has passed from death unto life. The issue is not whether he always feels alive in an emotional sense. The issue is whether God has done what He promised to do. And Jesus says He has. That is why assurance rests not on inner excitement but on the faithful word of the One who raises the dead.

Conclusion

The new birth nobody can fake is not a religious adjustment for men who were already basically alive. It is a resurrection miracle for men who were dead in trespasses and sins. Scripture could not be plainer. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me... is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Those are not small statements, and they will not fit into the little plastic gospel presentations that dominate so much of modern religion. Salvation is not God coaching a sick man into better performance. It is God giving life to a dead man who could never raise himself.

That is why the gospel must be preached with weight, urgency, and wonder. The preacher is not offering a religious product to improve the consumer's experience of life. He is declaring the message by which God rescues the dead from condemnation and gives them everlasting life through Jesus Christ. The sinner does not need less than that. He may think he does. He may ask for advice, encouragement, healing, or purpose. But beneath all of that lies the central issue. He is dead, and unless the Son of God gives him life, everything else is rearranging shadows in a cemetery. The church must recover the majesty of this truth or continue producing shallow professions with no awe in them.

So let the matter stand as the Bible states it. Regeneration is one of the greatest miracles God performs in time because in an instant He changes a man's eternal condition. He quickens the dead. He grants everlasting life. He removes condemnation. He unites the sinner with Christ. He transfers him into life. That is not religion. That is not emotionalism. That is not culture. That is not reform. That is resurrection. And once a man has seen that, he will never again speak of salvation as though it were some small thing. He will know that the new birth nobody can fake is a miracle from death unto life.

6 of 10: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake – Why a Born-Again Man Cannot Stay the Same

Introduction

One of the fastest ways to wreck the doctrine of the new birth is to swing into one ditch or the other. One ditch says that if a man is truly saved, he should become instantly flawless, sinless in practice, emotionally steady, spiritually deep, and practically mature in a way that leaves no room for failure, stumbling, chastening, or growth. The other ditch says that if a man claims to be saved, nothing really needs to change at all, because salvation is entirely inward and therefore any talk of evidence, fruit, appetite, conviction, or transformation must be legalism. Both ditches are wrong because both of them mishandle the biblical doctrine of life. The first mistake confuses life with maturity. The second mistake confuses grace with unreality. The new birth does not make a sinner perfect in his daily walk overnight, but it does make him alive. And where there is life, there will be signs of life.

That is why this subject is so practical. The new birth is inward and spiritual, yes, but it is not imaginary. It is not poetry. It is not church language for a vague emotional experience. It is not a denominational label. When God gives a man life, that life changes his inward bent, his desires, his responses, his relationship to sin, and his ability to hear and answer God. He may still stumble badly. He may still have habits, scars, battles, and seasons of carnality. He may still need rebuke, correction, and chastening. But the old peace he once had in sin is gone. The dead stillness of the old life is broken. Something has happened inside him that makes the old path impossible to walk with the same comfort he once had in it. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). That verse does not say he is a fully developed creature by next Tuesday. It says he is a new one.

That distinction must be held carefully or the whole doctrine gets twisted. Works are not the basis of salvation. Fruit is not the cause of life. A tree does not bear fruit in order to

become alive. It bears fruit because it is alive. A newborn baby does not breathe, cry, hunger, and move in order to earn birth. He does those things because he has been born. In the same way, the born-again believer does not perform good works in order to manufacture regeneration. He begins to manifest the signs of life because regeneration has already occurred. That does not mean the signs appear in the same measure or speed in every believer. It does mean they are real. This essay must therefore do two things at once. It must reject salvation by works without creating a fantasy salvation that leaves a man unchanged. It must show that the born-again man may still struggle, but he cannot stay the same.

1. Life Is Inward First, but It Does Not Stay Hidden Forever

The first thing to settle is that the new birth begins inwardly. Jesus said, “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). The immediate work of regeneration is not a cosmetic change to the outside of a man. It is a spiritual work in the inward man. That is why people get confused. They expect the first evidence of salvation to be some immediate outward dramatic transformation in every case, and when that does not happen in the exact pattern they prefer, they start rewriting the doctrine. But God’s work begins at the root, not the paint job. He changes the source before He changes the visible growth. He puts life within before fruit appears without. That is the order in Scripture, and the order matters.

At the same time, inward life does not remain completely invisible forever. If something is alive, it will move, respond, hunger, and show itself in some way. The Lord Jesus said, “Either make the tree good, and his fruit good” (Matthew 12:33). He tied inward condition to outward effect. Peter said, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). Notice that. Newborn babes have desires. They do not begin by writing theology textbooks or preaching sermons. They begin by wanting milk. They cry. They hunger. They respond. In the same way, the new believer may know very little, may be rough around the edges, may have a thousand things to learn, but if life is there, there will be some corresponding movement toward God, toward truth, toward Scripture, and away from the old dead ease in sin.

This is where people make a mess by demanding either too much or too little. Some want immediate polished fruit that looks like a ten-year saint in the first week after conversion. Others want to call any profession genuine even if there is no appetite, no conviction, no response, no change of inward relation to sin, and no evidence of God’s dealing at all. The Bible permits neither extreme. Life begins inwardly, but real inward life produces outward effects over time. That is not works salvation. That is reality. The same God who said a man must be born again also made it plain that living things do not remain indistinguishable from dead things forever.

2. The New Birth Gives a Man a New Inward Bent

When a man is born again, he does not cease being human, and he does not lose the flesh, but he does receive a new inward bent. Something in him is now turned in a direction it was not turned before. Before salvation, he may have had moments of guilt, fear, curiosity, or religious interest, but the settled drift of his inner man was away from God. After salvation, there is now an inward principle that responds differently. Paul said, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Romans 7:22). That is not the testimony of a natural man. That is the testimony of a man in whom something new has been planted. The inward man now delights where the old man once merely endured or ignored.

That new bent is one reason a born-again man cannot stay the same. He may try to go back to old patterns. He may wander badly. He may grieve the Spirit and make a mess. But the inward alignment has changed. There is now something in him that sides with God against him when he sins. There is something in him that says the Book is right, Christ is right, holiness is right, and this sin is wrong, even when the flesh is pulling hard in the other direction. That is why the believer’s misery in sin is often one of the strongest evidences of life. Before salvation he could roll in the mud with little more than occasional discomfort. After salvation the same mud sticks to him differently. It grieves him differently. It disturbs him differently. Why. Because the inward man has changed.

This is why the doctrine is so practical for confused believers. Many sincere Christians panic because they still feel the pull of the flesh and assume that means nothing real happened when they were saved. But the very presence of an inward struggle, an inward bent toward God, and an inward grief over sin may actually indicate the opposite. The lost man may feel shame, fear consequences, or resent himself, but he does not have the inward delight in God’s law that Paul describes. The born-again man does. He may not always walk consistently with that delight, but it is there, and it was not there before. That is not perfection. It is life.

3. A Born-Again Man Has a New Appetite

One of the clearest marks of life is appetite. Dead things do not hunger. Newborn things do. Peter says, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). That does not mean every new believer instantly becomes a Bible scholar. It means that life produces some measure of appetite for spiritual nourishment. A man who has been born of God may still be ignorant, inconsistent, distracted, or immature, but there is now within him some desire for truth, some attraction to the Word, some pull toward what feeds the new life God has given him. He may not know how to explain it yet, but he knows something in him wants what he once neglected.

That appetite can vary in strength, and it can be hindered. Carnality can dull it. Worldliness can choke it. bad teaching can misdirect it. Neglect can weaken it. But its presence matters. The same man who once could live quite content without Scripture, without prayer, without any real concern for pleasing God, now finds that he is not entirely at home in that neglect anymore. Even when he strays, something in him knows he is starving. Something in him knows he is off. Something in him is not satisfied with spiritual emptiness the way it once was. That is one reason backslidden believers are often miserable creatures. They have enough life to hunger, but enough disobedience to keep themselves famished.

This appetite is also why shallow religion cannot substitute for the real thing for very long in a truly saved man. He may go through motions for a while. He may sit under weak teaching for a season. But eventually the life in him begins to hunger for substance. He needs the Book. He needs truth. He needs Christ. He needs something more than performance and religious theater. That does not mean he will always seek it wisely or consistently, but the appetite itself is a sign that the new birth is not imaginary. Fruit is not the basis of salvation, but appetite is one of the evidences of life, and a born-again man cannot permanently live as though he has no spiritual hunger at all.

4. The New Birth Changes a Man's Relationship to Sin

Now here is where the matter gets especially important. The new birth does not make a believer sinless. Anyone who has read Romans 7, Galatians 5, or 1 John with open eyes knows better than that. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:8). The born-again man still has flesh. He still battles temptation. He can still fail badly. But his relationship to sin changes. Before salvation, sin may have brought trouble, shame, and damage, but it was still the native atmosphere of his life. After salvation, sin becomes an intruder, a grief, a conflict, and a source of inward warfare in a way it was not before. He may still commit it, but he cannot belong to it with the same peace.

John says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (1 John 3:9). The verse is not teaching sinless perfection, because the same epistle has already said believers do sin and must confess it (1 John 1:8-10). The point is about the settled character and ruling principle of the life. The man born of God does not live in sin as his untroubled element because "his seed remaineth in him" (1 John 3:9). There is now a divine principle in him that resists, convicts, grieves, and opposes sin. He may commit acts of sin, but he cannot settle into sin as the native, undisturbed course of his life with no inward protest from the life of God in him.

This is one reason some testimonies sound so different after conversion. The believer begins speaking of sin differently. Not just of consequences, embarrassment, or damage, but of offense against God. He feels it differently. He cannot always explain it perfectly, but his relation to sin has changed. The old jokes do not land the same. The old pleasures do not satisfy the same. The old hiding places do not feel safe the same. Sometimes this change appears quickly and dramatically. Sometimes it unfolds more gradually. But where there is new birth, there is a new relation to sin. That does not mean no struggle. It means no old peace.

5. The Born-Again Man Still Struggles Because the Flesh Remains

This is where balanced doctrine is essential. If all we said were that the believer changes, some would immediately turn that into perfectionism. But the Bible does not let us do that. The born-again man changes truly, but he does not lose the flesh. Paul says, “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other” (Galatians 5:17). That means the Christian life includes real conflict. The struggle is not proof that the new birth failed. In many cases, it is proof that it happened. The dead do not struggle with life. The spiritually alive do. Once the Spirit gives life, the war begins in earnest.

Romans 7 remains one of the most honest passages in the Bible for that reason. Paul says, “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Romans 7:19). That is not the cry of a hypocrite manufacturing a false profession. It is the cry of a man who has real life in the inward man and real conflict with the flesh. He says, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Romans 7:22), yet he also sees “another law” in his members (Romans 7:23). There is the whole battle. The new birth creates a new man within, but the old body remains a battlefield until the redemption of the body.

This truth helps prevent despair in sincere believers. Some Christians think that because they still have vile thoughts, temptations, old memories, emotional swings, or recurring struggles, they must not be saved. But the issue is not whether they struggle. The issue is what that struggle reveals. Do they now have an inward bent toward God. Do they grieve over sin. Do they desire righteousness. Do they feel the contradiction between what the flesh wants and what the inward man now loves. That struggle, painful as it is, often indicates life. The lost man may indulge or restrain the flesh for selfish reasons. The saved man experiences war because there are now two opposing principles at work within him.

6. God Chastens His Own Because They Are His Own

Another reason a born-again man cannot stay the same is that God will not leave His children alone in their sin. This is one of the great practical proofs that salvation is not

imaginary. Hebrews says, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Hebrews 12:6). That is not language for the unsaved. That is the language of sonship. The believer may wander, grow cold, become stubborn, or even plunge into serious sin, but if he belongs to God, God will deal with him. He may use conviction, inner misery, providential pressure, loss of peace, broken relationships, discipline through the Word, or other forms of correction, but He does not simply let His children make their home in the pigpen without interruption.

That means the born-again man may still fail, but he cannot stay comfortably settled in failure forever. David sinned terribly, but he did not enjoy peace in it. Psalm 51 is not the language of a man at ease in wickedness. It is the cry of a chastened saint. The prodigal son went far, but he could not remain there forever with the old ease. Something in him remembered the father’s house, and the father’s relation to him had not ceased to exist. That is how chastening works. It does not cancel sonship. It proves it. God’s correction is not hatred. It is fatherly love acting with holy seriousness.

This is an important distinction from works salvation. The believer is not kept saved by flawless obedience. He is kept by God, and part of God’s keeping is His fatherly chastening. That is why a saved man’s life may include painful dealings from the Lord. God is not trying to make him His child by discipline. He is disciplining him because he is His child already. Once that is understood, many things in the Christian life become clearer. The new birth gives life, the flesh creates conflict, and the Father’s hand refuses to leave that life ungoverned. All of that together explains why a born-again man cannot remain the same old man he once was.

7. Fruit Is the Evidence of Life, Not the Cause of It

This final point must be stated with precision. Good works are not the basis of salvation. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5). “For by grace are ye saved through faith... not of works” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Those verses must never be surrendered. A man is not born again because he produces fruit. He is born again by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. But the same passage in Ephesians that excludes works as the cause of salvation says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Ephesians 2:10). Works do not create the life, but life creates the capacity for works.

That is why the Lord Jesus spoke in terms of fruit. “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Matthew 7:18). He was not teaching that fruit is the root. He was teaching that fruit reveals the root. In the same way, James is not preaching salvation by works when he insists that faith without works is dead in the sense

of being useless, barren, and unmanifested (James 2:17). He is dealing with the outward vindication of what a man claims to possess. Real life will show itself. Not always evenly, not always dramatically, not always immediately in every area, but truly. The born-again man cannot remain permanently indistinguishable from the dead with no signs of life whatsoever.

This is where we must keep both truths together. If you make fruit the cause of salvation, you produce bondage and self-righteousness. If you deny fruit as the evidence of life, you produce cheap profession and false assurance. The biblical path is better than both errors. Salvation is entirely of grace through faith apart from works, and the life received in salvation produces real effects. The tree lives first, then bears. The child is born first, then breathes, cries, hungers, and grows. That is the right order. A born-again man cannot stay the same, not because he saves himself by reform, but because God has put life in him.

Conclusion

The new birth nobody can fake is inward and spiritual, but it is not imaginary. When God gives life, He does not merely alter a man's religious vocabulary. He plants something in him that changes his inward bent, his appetite, his relation to sin, his response to truth, and his ability to hear and answer God. That does not make the believer instantly sinless, flawless, or fully mature. The flesh remains. The struggle remains. Growth remains necessary. Chastening remains real. But life also remains real. The same old dead ease in sin is broken. The same old peace in spiritual neglect is disturbed. The same old contentment with darkness is gone. Why. Because a new creature now lives where only the old man reigned before.

This truth guards us from two serious errors. It keeps us from salvation by works, because fruit is not the cause of life. And it keeps us from fantasy salvation, because life without any evidence is not the biblical pattern. A child does not earn birth by breathing. He breathes because he is born. A tree does not become alive by producing fruit. It produces fruit because it is alive. In the same way, the born-again believer manifests signs of life because the Spirit of God has already done a real work within him. That work may begin small, may grow unevenly, and may pass through many battles, but it is real all the same.

So when we say a born-again man cannot stay the same, we are not saying he becomes perfect. We are saying he cannot remain what he was with the old peace, the old deadness, and the old untouched relation to sin. God has intervened. The Spirit has given life. The Father will chasten. The inward man now responds. The appetite now exists. The war has begun. That is not legalism. That is life. And where there is life, there will be signs of life,

because the new birth nobody can fake is not a slogan, not an emotion, and not a church performance. It is the life of God in the soul of a man.

7 of 10: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake – The War Between the Two Natures

Introduction

One of the most confusing things that happens to a sinner after he is truly born again is that he discovers the Christian life is not the smooth, floating, cloud-walking fantasy a lot of shallow religion promised him. He thought maybe once he got saved the bad thoughts would vanish, the temptations would dry up, the pride would evaporate, the lusts would fall dead, and the inward pressure would disappear into some kind of permanent spiritual sunshine. Then a few days, weeks, or months later he finds himself battling things in his mind, heart, emotions, and flesh that make him wonder whether anything happened at all. He reads the Bible and sees holiness. He feels conviction. He wants to do right. But at the same time he feels another pull in the opposite direction, and the conflict is so intense that some of the Lord's people have nearly gone out of their minds trying to understand it. That is why this subject is so important. Many believers are tormented, not because they are unsaved, but because they do not understand what happened to them after they got saved.

The Bible does not hide that conflict. It reveals it with startling honesty. Paul says, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other" (Galatians 5:17). That is not a verse about a lost man deciding whether to become religious. That is a verse about war inside a born-again believer. Romans 7 says, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22), and in the very same passage Paul confesses, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind" (Romans 7:23). There you have the whole struggle laid out under divine inspiration. The Christian life is not the improvement of the old nature. It is the conflict between what is born of God and what remains in the flesh. That means the battle itself is not proof the new birth failed. In many cases it is proof that it happened.

That truth cuts against two destructive extremes. One extreme says that if a man is really saved, he should no longer struggle inwardly with lust, pride, discouragement, temptation, or carnality. That is perfectionist nonsense, and it has tormented many sincere saints. The other extreme says that because Christians still struggle, nothing real happened in conversion, and all talk of new life is just religious language covering the same old hypocrisy. That is cynical unbelief, and it has shipwrecked many souls. The Bible destroys both errors at once. Yes, something real happened. Yes, the believer has new life. Yes, the

inward man delights in God. Yes, the Spirit of God dwells in him. But yes, the flesh remains, and the two are at war. The answer is not to pretend the war is not there. The answer is to understand it biblically so the believer can fight it without despair.

1. The New Birth Does Not Remove the Flesh

The first thing that must be established is that when a man is born again, he receives a new nature, but he does not lose the old flesh. That is where much confusion begins. Some people talk as though salvation is the extermination of the old nature. If that were true, Romans 7 would never have been written, Galatians 5 would never have been written, and half the New Testament warnings to believers would be meaningless. Paul says plainly, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). Notice the tense. He does not say, “in me before I got saved.” He says, “in my flesh.” Present tense. That means the apostle, as a saved man, still recognized that his flesh had not been converted into holiness.

This is vital because many believers panic when they discover that old desires, tendencies, and temptations are still present after salvation. They assume that if they were truly born again, the old pull would simply vanish. But the Bible never promises that in this life. It promises victory over the dominion of sin, not the absence of conflict. It promises the Spirit’s power, not the removal of the battlefield. The flesh remains in the believer until the redemption of the body. Paul says, “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23). Until that day, the believer carries around unredeemed flesh. That body is not the source of the new life, but it is still the place where the old impulses, appetites, and weaknesses operate.

That truth should not discourage the saint. It should clarify the struggle. The presence of flesh after conversion does not mean regeneration was unreal. It means God’s work in salvation was not the glorification of the body but the quickening of the inner man. The believer is not yet rid of every source of temptation. He is now equipped to fight temptation with life from above. That is a great difference. Before salvation the sinner had flesh and no new life. After salvation he has flesh and a new man at war with it. That is why the Christian life often feels like conflict from the beginning. God did not clean the battlefield away. He put life into a man who was once dead and thereby started a war that had not existed before in the same way.

2. The Inward Man and the Flesh Are Contrary One to Another

Galatians 5:17 is one of the clearest explanations of the Christian struggle in the Bible: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” That verse is not describing a mild disagreement. It is not the

language of tension you can manage with a few tips and a better planner. It is war language. “Contrary.” The flesh and the Spirit do not cooperate. They do not share goals. They do not meet in the middle and work out a compromise. One pulls toward God, holiness, and truth. The other pulls toward self, lust, pride, indulgence, and rebellion. The believer is where those two lines collide.

That is why the Christian life cannot be explained merely as moral improvement. Improvement suggests you are fixing one thing. Scripture says there are two opposing principles present in the believer’s experience. The inward man delights in God. The flesh resists Him. The Spirit leads toward holiness. The flesh drags toward sin. The believer may feel that war in his thought life, speech, emotions, habits, relationships, ambitions, and hidden motives. He may want to pray and yet feel deadness. He may want purity and yet feel lust. He may want humility and yet feel pride flaring up at every insult. He may want faith and yet feel discouragement and fear. That conflict is not imaginary. It is the outworking of Galatians 5:17 in real life.

This is also why shallow preaching often fails to help real believers. It treats all inward conflict as though it were proof of spiritual failure alone, instead of explaining that conflict itself is part of the Christian condition. Now do not misunderstand that. The flesh is never excused. The believer is responsible to walk in the Spirit. But he must understand the structure of the battle or he will either become proud when he seems to be winning or crushed when he sees how fierce the war actually is. The old nature does not quietly retire when the new birth comes. It fights. The new life does not politely coexist with the flesh. It fights too. That is the normal Christian battlefield.

3. Romans 7 Shows the Honest Struggle of a Saved Man

Romans 7 has driven some people crazy because they keep trying to make it say what their system demands instead of letting it say what it says. Paul writes, “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I” (Romans 7:15). Then he says, “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Romans 7:18). Finally he says, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Romans 7:22). That is not the speech of a lost Pharisee. The natural man does not delight in the law of God after the inward man. That is the speech of a regenerate apostle explaining the misery of the inward war.

Now some people try to escape the force of Romans 7 by claiming Paul is only describing his pre-conversion experience under the law. But that does not fit the language. The man in Romans 7 hates the evil he does, delights in God’s law after the inward man, and distinguishes between himself and the sin that dwells in him. He is not just an awakened

legalist. He is a saved man learning the depth of the battle. He cries, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24). That is not a cry of a man who thinks nothing happened. It is the cry of a man who knows exactly enough about what happened to realize he needs deliverance beyond himself.

Romans 7 is a mercy to the believer because it tells the truth. It keeps a saint from thinking he is the only one who has felt torn, frustrated, ashamed, and burdened by the contradiction between what he now loves inwardly and what he still finds pulling in his members. Paul is not glorifying defeat. He is diagnosing conflict. He is not surrendering to sin. He is exposing the structure of the struggle so that the believer can stop looking to the flesh for what only the Spirit can produce. Romans 7 is not written to make the believer comfortable in carnality. It is written to keep him from despairing when he discovers that holiness in practice will involve war.

4. The Battle Itself Is Evidence of Life

One of the most helpful truths for a struggling believer is this: the battle itself is evidence of life. Dead men do not wage war against sin from the inward man. Dead men may fear consequences. They may hate embarrassment. They may regret damage. But they do not delight in God’s law after the inward man. They do not have the Spirit against the flesh in the biblical sense. They may restrain the flesh for selfish reasons, but the kind of inward conflict Paul describes belongs to a man in whom something new has been born. The war is not proof that nothing happened. It is often proof that something did.

Before conversion, a man may have known guilt, but he did not know the same inward war. He might have had occasional conscience trouble, but he did not feel torn between a new inward delight in God and the old pull of the flesh. He could live in sin with a different kind of ease. He might suffer consequences, but he did not feel the same contradiction of nature. After conversion, the believer often finds that sins he once committed casually now trouble him deeply. Old patterns that once felt natural now produce inward grief. Temptations that once rolled over him without resistance now meet opposition from within. Why. Because there is now an inward life that was absent before.

This is one reason many tenderhearted Christians are needlessly miserable. They think the very fact that they feel the conflict means they must be frauds. In reality, the fraud is often the person who can sin without inward war and still speak lightly of belonging to God. The saint who grieves, struggles, confesses, fights, and longs to please Christ may be giving far more evidence of life than he realizes. Again, that does not justify failure. But it does explain why the Christian battle can feel so severe. A war presupposes two sides. When the new birth occurs, there are now two opposing principles in play, and the believer feels the clash.

5. Perfectionism Is a Cruel Lie

One of the cruelest lies ever preached to God's people is that a truly saved person should no longer struggle inwardly with sin. Sometimes that lie is dressed up in holiness language. Sometimes it comes through perfectionist teaching. Sometimes it comes through the subtle pressure of church culture, where everybody acts like victory means they barely get tempted anymore. The effect is always the same. Tender believers feel like monsters because they still fight lust, pride, jealousy, fear, bitterness, discouragement, impatience, and carnality. They conclude either that salvation is unreal or that they are some bizarre exception among the saints. Neither conclusion is biblical.

The Bible does not teach sinless perfection in this life. John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). James says, "In many things we offend all" (James 3:2). Paul says believers must mortify the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13), which would be a strange command if there were no deeds left to mortify. The presence of these commands and warnings proves the battle is ongoing. The believer is to fight, confess, forsake, mortify, and grow. None of that language fits the perfectionist dream world in which the saint has supposedly moved beyond real inward struggle.

Perfectionism is cruel because it turns a battlefield into a courtroom. It takes the normal Christian war and treats it as evidence that the soldier does not belong in the army. Instead of helping believers understand the conflict and fight it biblically, it shames them for experiencing what the Bible itself plainly describes. The result is often either despair or hypocrisy. Some saints despair and think they must not be saved. Others learn to fake victory and hide their struggles behind polished religious language. Neither outcome glorifies God. The truth is better. The saved man struggles because the flesh remains and the new life is real. That truth humbles him, steadies him, and keeps him fighting without pretending the war is over.

6. Cynicism Is Just as Wrong as Perfectionism

The opposite error is no better. Some people look at the struggles of believers and conclude that conversion must therefore be meaningless. They say, "See, Christians still lust, still get proud, still get discouraged, still fail, so what difference did salvation make?" That is cynical nonsense built on ignorance of the doctrine of the two natures. It assumes that if something real happened, all struggle should disappear. But that is not what Scripture teaches. Scripture teaches that the real change is precisely what creates the war. Before salvation the flesh could run with far less contradiction. After salvation the inward man rises against it. The cynic mistakes the battlefield for proof that no army exists.

This error often comes from people who want a cartoon version of salvation so they can mock it. They imagine that if conversion were real, the believer would become an angel overnight, never battling temptation again, never stumbling again, never fighting inward darkness again. But the Bible does not promise angelhood in this life. It promises new life in a man still living in fallen flesh. That new life changes his destiny, standing, relationship to God, and inward condition, but it does not yet redeem his body. That is why Paul says we “groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23). The struggle remains because complete glorification has not yet occurred.

Cynicism also fails to notice the actual changes that do occur. The believer now has an inward bent toward God, a new appetite for truth, a changed relationship to sin, a capacity for spiritual discernment, and the chastening hand of the Father upon him. He may still fail, but he cannot make peace with failure the way he once did. He may still battle lust, but now he hates it as sin against God. He may still feel pride, but now he is smitten by it when the Spirit shines light on it. He may still get discouraged, but now he knows where help lies and why unbelief grieves the Lord. The cynic sees the remnants of the old battle and misses the whole miracle of the new life.

7. Victory Comes by Walking in the Spirit, Not Improving the Flesh

Since the Christian life is a war between the flesh and the Spirit, victory does not come by improving the flesh. That is the great lesson so many believers have to learn painfully. The answer is not to trust the flesh less badly. The answer is not to make the old nature more religious. The answer is to walk in the Spirit. Paul says, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). Notice he does not say educate the flesh until it becomes holy. He does not say flatter the flesh into cooperation. He says walk in the Spirit. The flesh is not rehabilitated. It is overruled as the believer yields to the Spirit of God and the truth of God.

That walk involves dependence, reckoning, yielding, and obedience. Romans 6 says, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11). That means the believer must take God’s side against the old man. He must stop trying to get something good out of what God already condemned. He must refuse to treat the flesh as a trustworthy ally. He must feed the inward man with the Word, respond to the Spirit’s promptings, confess sin honestly, and set his affection on things above. None of that is glamorous, but it is real Christianity. The war is won in practice not by pretending the flesh is gone, but by refusing to enthrone it.

This is also where hope comes in for the struggling saint. The presence of conflict does not mean he is trapped in endless defeat. Romans 8 follows Romans 7 for a reason. After the

agony of the inward struggle, Paul says, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). That freedom is not sinless perfection, but it is real deliverance from the flesh as reigning master. The believer is not helpless. He is not abandoned. He is not doomed to live under the tyranny of the old nature as though nothing changed. He has the Spirit of God. He has the Word of God. He has union with Christ. He has access to grace. He has hope in the middle of the war.

Conclusion

The war between the two natures is one of the clearest proofs that the new birth nobody can fake is real. The Christian life is not the improvement of the old nature but the conflict between what is born of God and what remains in the flesh. That is why believers still battle lust, pride, discouragement, temptation, bitterness, fear, and carnality. The flesh remains. The body is not yet redeemed. The battlefield has not been removed. But the presence of that war is not proof the new birth failed. It is often proof that it took place. Before salvation the sinner could move in darkness with a different kind of peace. After salvation the inward man rises against it.

This truth protects the saint from both destructive extremes. It guards him from perfectionist delusion, which says a saved man should no longer struggle. And it guards him from cynical unbelief, which says struggle proves nothing changed. The Bible says otherwise. Romans 7 tells the truth about the agony of the conflict. Galatians 5 tells the truth about the opposition between flesh and Spirit. Romans 8 tells the truth about the Spirit’s power for victory. The answer is not to deny the war. The answer is to understand it, fight it biblically, and refuse to let either pride or despair define the believer’s thinking.

So if you are one of those believers who has been tormented because you do not understand what happened to you after salvation, let the Book speak. The battle you feel is not strange. The inward contradiction is not accidental. The grief over sin is not meaningless. The longing to please God in the middle of your weakness is not imaginary. It is the evidence of life at war with flesh. The new birth nobody can fake did not turn you into an angel overnight. It made you alive unto God in Christ, put the Spirit of God within you, and started a war that will end only when this mortal puts on immortality. Until then, fight on.

8 of 10: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake – Eternal Life Cannot Be Unborn

Introduction

There are few truths that expose religious confusion faster than this one: if a man has truly been born of God, then he cannot be unborn. That statement is so simple a child can understand it, and so strong a religionist can choke on it for three hours and still not get around it. The trouble is not that the Bible is unclear. The trouble is that men keep trying to drag grace back under works, relationship back under performance, and divine birth back under human maintenance. But the new birth is not a temporary arrangement God sets up to see whether you can keep yourself saved. It is not a probationary trial period. It is not the Lord saying, "I will make you My child for now, and then I will watch to see whether you can remain worthy of the family name." That is not Bible salvation. Bible salvation is a birth, and birth establishes relationship. Jesus Christ did not tell Nicodemus he needed a spiritual internship. He said, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).

That is why this doctrine is one of the great battlegrounds of clarity. Once a man sees salvation as a birth, the whole works system starts wobbling like a rotten fence in a hurricane. A child may grieve his father, shame his father, disobey his father, break fellowship with his father, and need severe chastening from his father, but he does not cease to be his father's child every time he fails. Relationship established by birth is not maintained by flawless performance. Fellowship may rise and fall. Reward may be gained or lost. Testimony may be strengthened or wrecked. Joy may be full or broken. But birth is birth. That is why the Lord Jesus said, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:28). He did not say they shall never perish unless they have a very bad month spiritually. He said never. Men can argue with that if they want to, but the argument is not with the preacher. It is with the Saviour.

This subject matters because millions of professing Christians are living under one of two disasters. Some are trusting a false security with no evidence of life whatsoever, which is dangerous. Others have truly trusted Christ, but they live under constant torment because they have been taught that salvation is a revolving door. They are saved on Monday, in danger Tuesday, hoping by Wednesday, panicking by Thursday, recommitting on Friday, and trying to guess where they stand on Saturday. That is not the peace of the gospel. That is religious bondage masquerading as holiness. The Bible gives a better answer. The new birth nobody can fake establishes sonship, sealing, eternal life, and divine preservation. Fellowship can be broken, yes. Rewards can be lost, yes. Testimony can be ruined, yes. Chastening can come, absolutely. But a birth cannot be undone. Eternal life cannot be unborn.

1. Birth Establishes Relationship, Not Probation

The first truth that must be fixed firmly in the mind is that birth establishes relationship. It does not create probation. When a child is born into a family, he does not become a

temporary candidate for sonship pending future review. He is a son by birth. That relationship may be joyful or strained, sweet or painful, obedient or rebellious, but the relationship itself stands because it was established by birth, not by performance. That is why the language of Scripture matters so much. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12). Not candidates to become sons if they perform well enough. Sons of God. Again, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God” (1 John 3:2). Not later if we hold our score high enough. “Now.”

This is where religious systems get twisted because they keep treating salvation as though it were an employee contract rather than a birth into a family. If salvation is merely a contract maintained by conduct, then every serious failure threatens termination. But the Bible does not speak primarily in those terms when dealing with the new birth. It speaks in terms of father and children, sons and inheritance, birth and life. That does not eliminate responsibility. It grounds responsibility in relationship. A child obeys because he belongs, not in order to become a child. In the same way, the believer serves, grows, confesses, and walks with God because he has been born of God, not in order to keep God from un-birthing him.

This is also why the new birth is such a devastating answer to salvation-by-works confusion. Works can never secure sonship because works do not produce birth. God does. “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). Since God gives the birth, He establishes the relationship. And if He establishes the relationship by grace, then the relationship does not fluctuate with the believer’s daily performance as though grace were merely a nicer version of works. The relationship is real because the birth is real. That is the foundation of eternal security. The security does not begin with your grip on God. It begins with God’s act in bringing you into His family.

2. Eternal Life Means What It Says

The second truth is just as plain and just as hated by every system that wants to keep the believer on a leash: eternal life means eternal life. Jesus said, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36). He did not say may have it if he keeps it warm enough. He said hath it. Present possession. Then in John 5:24 the Lord says, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” That verse should have ended this argument for every honest reader. “Hath everlasting life.” “Shall not come into condemnation.” “Is passed from death unto life.” Those are not shaky phrases. Those are granite words.

If eternal life can be lost, then the term itself becomes a joke. It would not be eternal in any meaningful biblical sense. It would be temporary life labeled eternal until the believer failed badly enough to cancel it. But Jesus did not say He gives temporary life with eternal possibilities. He said, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish” (John 10:28). Notice the order. He gives the life, and the result is they shall never perish. The security rests in the gift and the Giver. That is why all the religious systems that make salvation depend on ongoing human performance inevitably have to explain away plain language. They cannot leave the text standing as written because the text destroys their treadmill.

Now someone will always come along and say, “Yes, but eternal life is only eternal if you keep believing correctly enough and obeying faithfully enough.” But that argument sneaks works in through the back door after pretending to honor grace through the front. If the continued existence of eternal life depends on the consistency of the recipient rather than the faithfulness of the Giver, then the thing is not secure at all. The Bible presents eternal life as God’s gift in Christ. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (1 John 5:11). Given. Not loaned. Not conditionally leased. Given. And if the life is in the Son, then the issue is not whether the believer performs perfectly but whether the Son remains who He is. He does.

3. The Sealing of the Spirit Is Unto the Day of Redemption

If the Lord wanted believers walking around in constant uncertainty, He would not have given them the doctrine of sealing. But He did. Paul says, “In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13). Notice when that happened. “After that ye believed.” Not after years of proving yourselves. Not after reaching a certain level of spiritual consistency. After ye believed. Then in Ephesians 4:30 he says, “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” That verse is dynamite. It proves two things at once. First, believers can grieve the Spirit. Second, even while grieving Him, they remain sealed unto the day of redemption.

That destroys the idea that salvation hangs by a thread every time a believer sins. If grieving the Spirit automatically unsealed the believer, Paul’s command would make no sense. He is addressing saved people who have the capacity to grieve the indwelling Spirit precisely because they are sealed by Him. The seal is not a decoration. It is a mark of divine ownership, preservation, and security. The believer may be foolish enough to grieve the Spirit, but he is not powerful enough to break the seal God has placed upon him. The sealing is unto the day of redemption, not until the next moral collapse.

This also fits perfectly with the doctrine of birth. The Spirit's indwelling presence is tied to sonship. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts" (Galatians 4:6). The Spirit is not moving in and out like a nervous tenant every time the believer's emotions fluctuate. He is given as the seal of those who belong to Christ. That does not excuse sin. It intensifies the seriousness of sin, because now the child of God is grieving the very Spirit by whom he is sealed. But the security of the relationship remains. God's seal is stronger than man's inconsistency. If that were not true, no believer would last five minutes.

4. Fellowship Can Be Broken Without Sonship Being Broken

Here is where many people get confused, and the confusion has ruined a lot of preaching. They fail to distinguish between relationship and fellowship. The relationship established by the new birth is permanent. The fellowship within that relationship can be damaged. A child remains a child when he disobeys his father, but the sweetness, joy, and openness of the fellowship can be broken until matters are corrected. That is why 1 John 1:9 is written to believers: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Confession restores fellowship. It does not re-create sonship every time.

David is one of the clearest examples. After his great sin, he did not pray, "Lord, make me your child again." He said, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (Psalm 51:12). The salvation was still God's salvation. What had been damaged was the joy, the fellowship, the cleanliness of communion. That is how sin works in the believer's life. It does not dissolve the birth, but it can wreck peace, usefulness, power, and intimacy. A saved man can become a miserable wreck through sin. He can lose joy, lose testimony, lose reward, lose effectiveness, and bring terrible consequences upon himself and others. But those losses are not the same thing as losing the new birth itself.

This distinction also keeps the doctrine from becoming careless. People hear eternal security and sometimes imagine it means sin is no big deal. That is foolishness. Sin is a tremendous deal. It can cost a believer dearly in this life. It can bring severe chastening, public shame, broken fellowship, ruined ministry, wasted years, and loss at the judgment seat of Christ. But none of that means the child ceases to be the Father's child. It means the Father deals with His child as a Father. Those who cannot distinguish between fellowship and relationship end up either denying security or pretending sin is harmless. The Bible denies both errors. Security is real, and sin is serious.

5. Chastening Proves Sonship Instead of Canceling It

One of the strongest proofs of eternal security is not merely the promises of preservation but the doctrine of chastening. Hebrews says, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Hebrews 12:6). That is not the language of expulsion from the family. It is the language of discipline within the family. God does not chasten strangers as sons. He chastens sons as sons. In fact, the passage goes so far as to say that if a man is without chastisement, he is not functioning in the position of a true son in the passage’s logic (Hebrews 12:8). The whole point is that the Father disciplines those who belong to Him.

That means when a believer sins, God’s answer is not to un-birth him. God’s answer is to deal with him. Sometimes that dealing is inward conviction. Sometimes it is providential pressure. Sometimes it is painful consequences. Sometimes it is drastic. Corinth is a classic example. Paul says some believers there were weak and sickly, and some had even died under the Lord’s hand because of sin related to the Lord’s table (1 Corinthians 11:30). Yet even there he says, “when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:32). There is the distinction in blazing light. Chastened by the Lord, but not condemned with the world.

This is why eternal security does not produce carelessness in the saint who understands it correctly. It produces reverence, gratitude, and sobriety. The believer realizes he belongs to a holy Father who loves him enough to correct him. His safety is not the safety of distance but the safety of sonship. He is not out in the cold hoping to earn his way back in every week. He is in the family, and therefore his Father will not ignore his rebellion. That is far stronger than the weak religious system that tries to motivate holiness by threatening to cancel the birth every time the child stumbles. Grace does not weaken holiness. It places holiness in the hands of a faithful Father.

6. Rewards Can Be Lost and Testimony Can Be Ruined Without Salvation Being Lost

Another confusion that poisons this whole discussion is the failure to distinguish between salvation and reward. The Bible does not teach that a believer can lose eternal life, but it absolutely teaches that a believer can lose reward. Paul says of a man whose work is burned up at the judgment seat, “he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Corinthians 3:15). There is the distinction. Loss, but saved. The man’s works were worthless. The man himself still belongs to Christ. That verse alone should have cured a lot of careless exegesis. God knows how to punish, evaluate, strip, and expose a believer’s bad work without unmaking the salvation He gave by grace.

A believer can also ruin his testimony. David did. Lot did. Solomon did in devastating ways. Their sins brought reproach, misery, consequences, and lasting scars. Nobody reading

Scripture honestly could call those matters light. But Scripture does not say God erased the new birth equivalent every time one of His own fell into grievous sin. Rather, the Bible records chastening, shame, and loss. That is a far more sobering and biblical presentation than the cheap threat system that says every sin puts the believer back under damnation until he gets himself sorted out. The saints of God can make terrible messes. That is one reason the grace of God is so amazing. It does not excuse the mess. It preserves the son through it and often through painful dealings.

This also makes sense of many warning passages. Warnings to believers are real. They warn about discipline, deception, loss of reward, broken fellowship, hardening of heart, divine chastening, and temporal judgment. They do not need to be twisted into threats that every failure dissolves sonship. God warns His children because He loves them and because consequences are real. He is not playing games. But the security of the birth remains grounded in grace. That is why salvation is secure while Christian living remains profoundly serious. A saved man can wreck much in this life, but he cannot undo the birth God gave him.

7. Grace Gives a Standing That Works Could Never Secure

At the heart of all this is the contrast between grace and works. If salvation is maintained by human performance, then it is not truly by grace. Paul says, “And if by grace, then is it no more of works” (Romans 11:6). Grace and works are not two equal partners holding the same contract. If you make works the maintenance system of salvation, you have destroyed grace in the matter of standing before God. The believer’s standing is in Christ, not in his fluctuating obedience. He is “accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). Not accepted in the beloved as long as he performs above a certain threshold. Accepted in the beloved. That standing is secured by Christ’s work, not the believer’s consistency.

This is why the doctrine of eternal security is not a side issue. It is tied directly to the nature of grace itself. If a believer’s future depends finally on the durability of his own obedience, then no man is safe, no conscience can rest, and grace becomes a temporary boost rather than a saving reality. But the Bible says, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). Justification is God’s legal declaration based on Christ’s righteousness. If that declaration can be repeatedly reversed because of the believer’s failures, then justification becomes as unstable as the sinner who needed it. The whole gospel collapses into spiritual probation.

Grace gives what works could never secure: a standing before God rooted in Christ’s finished work and applied through the new birth into God’s family. That standing then becomes the ground from which the believer serves, grows, fights sin, and pursues

holiness. He is not climbing toward acceptance. He is working from acceptance. He is not obeying in order to remain born. He is obeying because he has been born. Once that is understood, the Christian life begins to make sense. Assurance does not produce laziness in the true saint. It produces gratitude, love, and steady endurance because the child of God knows he belongs to a Father who will never deny His own work.

Conclusion

The new birth nobody can fake is not a temporary arrangement that hangs on human performance. It is a real birth into God's family, and birth establishes a relationship that cannot be undone by failure. Fellowship can be broken. Rewards can be lost. Testimony can be ruined. Chastening can come hard and heavy. But a birth cannot be reversed. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (1 John 3:2). "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:28). "Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). Those are not fragile words. They are the language of security grounded in divine action, not human maintenance.

This truth does not make sin safe. It makes grace glorious. The believer who understands eternal security does not say, "Then sin does not matter." He says, "Then I belong to a holy Father who will deal with me as His child, and I never want to grieve the One who loved me enough to save me." Security does not lessen chastening. It explains it. Security does not remove the seriousness of Christian living. It roots Christian living in relationship rather than terror. The child of God fights sin not to keep himself born, but because he is born and because the life of God is in him.

So let the systems of confusion argue if they want to. Let them turn sonship into probation, eternal life into temporary life, sealing into a revolving door, and grace into a nicer form of works. The Book stands against them. The new birth establishes what works could never produce and human failure cannot undo. Salvation is not maintained by the weakness of the believer but preserved by the faithfulness of God. Eternal life cannot be unborn, because the God who gives it does not learn helplessness after giving it. And that is one of the greatest comforts, strengths, and battleground clarities in all the doctrine of the new birth.

9 of 10: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake – False Conversions and Religious Counterfeits

Introduction

One of the most uncomfortable subjects in all of Bible doctrine is the subject of false conversion, and it is uncomfortable for a good reason. It forces men to stop playing games with religious language and deal with reality. It tells the church crowd that not everybody sitting in the pew belongs to God. It tells the baptized that water is not life. It tells the emotional that tears are not birth. It tells the active that ministry is not regeneration. It tells the doctrinally informed that vocabulary is not salvation. And it tells the respectable that conformity is not Christ. That subject makes people nervous because it pulls the mask off a kind of religion that thrives on appearances. But the Lord Jesus Christ was never nervous about exposing counterfeit religion. He spoke of tares among the wheat (Matthew 13:25), wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15), and those who would say, "Lord, Lord," only to hear, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:22-23). That is not revival exaggeration. That is the language of the Son of God dealing with religious fraud.

Now this chapter is not written to make tender believers stare at their navels until they lose all joy, peace, and assurance. It is not written to drive genuine saints into paralysis, as though every struggle proves they are lost. We have already seen in this series that the born-again believer still battles the flesh, still needs chastening, still grows, and still fights inward war. This chapter is not about the struggles of the saved. It is about the counterfeit of the unsaved who have attached themselves to the culture of Christianity without ever receiving the life of Christ. There is a world of difference between a saved man fighting sin and a lost man acting religious. The one has life at war with flesh. The other has flesh dressed up in religion. The church must know the difference, or it will keep mistaking motion for life, enthusiasm for regeneration, and noise for birth.

This subject matters now more than ever because modern religion has mass-produced professions without regeneration. Men are taught to repeat phrases, sign cards, walk aisles, join churches, and adopt Christian speech patterns while often hearing very little about repentance toward God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the new birth, the wrath of God, the corruption of the flesh, or the necessity of divine life. The result is congregations filled with people who know how to act saved, talk saved, sing saved, and post saved while remaining strangers to the power of God. Paul warned about men "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). That is exactly what false conversion produces. This essay must therefore be sharp enough to expose the counterfeit without undermining the doctrine of grace. The answer to false professions is not salvation by works. The answer is a return to the biblical marks of the new birth.

1. Not Everyone Who Sounds Christian Has Been Born Again

One of the great mistakes of shallow religion is the assumption that if a man can talk the language of Christianity, he must belong to Christ. But words alone prove nothing. A parrot

can imitate human speech without understanding a syllable of what it says, and there are plenty of religious parrots in church culture. They know how to say “Praise the Lord,” “I’m blessed,” “God is good,” “I felt led,” “I accepted Jesus,” and a hundred other phrases that float around Christian circles like badges of belonging. But Jesus did not say, “By their vocabulary ye shall know them.” He said, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). The issue is not whether a man can repeat the words of the faith. The issue is whether God has done the work of regeneration in his soul.

The Lord Jesus spoke plainly about this danger when He said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 7:21). That is a terrifying verse because it proves verbal profession can exist without possession. A man may say the right title. He may acknowledge Christ outwardly. He may speak in reverent terms. He may even speak with zeal and apparent sincerity. Yet Christ says not every one that saith shall enter. That means saying is not enough. Confession with the mouth matters when it rises from real faith, but mouth religion by itself can exist where the heart has never been changed.

This is why religious culture is such a dangerous camouflage. A man can grow up around Christians, learn the phrases, absorb the rhythms, and speak fluently in the dialect of the saved while remaining dead in trespasses and sins. He knows what to say in prayer meetings, how to testify in a way that gets nods, how to sound humble, and how to quote familiar verses. But language is not life. A man may know how to describe the new birth and still not have experienced it. Nicodemus had theological knowledge. What he lacked was life. So did many Pharisees. So do many churchgoers now. Christian language may reveal culture. It does not automatically reveal regeneration.

2. Surface Passion Can Exist Without Spiritual Life

Another deadly confusion is the idea that strong emotion or visible passion must mean a man is genuinely converted. But the Bible nowhere teaches that emotional intensity equals regeneration. Men can get excited about all kinds of things that do not save them. They can be stirred by music, by crowd atmosphere, by fear, by guilt, by admiration for a preacher, by family expectation, or by the emotional release that comes from a religious moment. Tears are real tears, but tears are not necessarily the new birth. Excitement is real excitement, but excitement is not necessarily eternal life. The flesh can become very emotional, especially in a religious setting, without ever becoming spiritual.

Jesus dealt with this in the parable of the sower. He said of one kind of hearer, “anon with joy receiveth it” (Matthew 13:20), yet “hath not root in himself” (Matthew 13:21). There is the whole issue. Joy without root. Quick response without depth. Emotion without life.

Religious excitement can spring up fast because the flesh likes moments, impressions, and experiences. But where there is no root, the thing withers when pressure comes. That is why some professions look so promising for a little while and then vanish like morning fog. The person was moved, but not born. Stirred, but not regenerated. Affected, but not made alive.

This is not written to despise emotion. The gospel should affect men. Truth ought to move the heart. The new birth is not cold machinery. But emotion is a servant, not the master. When emotion becomes the standard by which conversion is judged, false assurance spreads like mold in a damp room. People begin to think they are saved because they cried, trembled, felt peace, had a powerful moment, or responded intensely in a service. But the issue is not whether the flesh was stirred. The issue is whether the Spirit of God used the Word of God to bring life through faith in Jesus Christ. Passion can accompany the new birth. It can also be faked by the flesh.

3. Church Culture Can Be Imitated Without Christ Being Possessed

One of the hardest truths for some people to face is that a man can fit beautifully into church culture and still be lost. He can know when to stand, when to sit, when to say amen, when to bow his head, how to shake hands, how to dress, how to smile, how to speak respectfully, and how to look like part of the family. He may be deeply involved, well liked, outwardly disciplined, and highly appreciated. He may sing in the choir, work in the nursery, teach a class, usher at the door, and sit faithfully under preaching for years. Yet if he has never been born again, all of that is movement without life. Church culture is not the kingdom of God. It is possible to become an expert in its customs while remaining outside the family of God.

The Pharisees prove that religious conformity can go a very long way without regeneration. Jesus said to them, “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts” (Luke 16:15). Before men, they looked strong. Before God, they were exposed. The same thing happens in churches every week. Men are impressed by consistency, seriousness, and visible commitment, and often they should be grateful for those outward things in their place. But none of them can replace life. “The LORD seeth not as man seeth” (1 Samuel 16:7). God is not fooled by somebody learning the choreography of church life. He looks for the marks of the new birth, not merely the habits of the Christian subculture.

This is why some people are hardest to reach precisely because they fit in so well. The drunk in the bar may know he is a mess. The polished religious counterfeit often feels safe because he knows the culture well enough to avoid suspicion. He can imitate the sound of faith, the pace of faith, the routines of faith, and the language of faith. But Christianity is not

a costume. It is life in Christ. And where that life is missing, the outer conformity, however impressive, cannot save. A man can live his whole life among the saints and die without the life of God if all he ever had was imitation.

4. Ritual Confidence Produces False Assurance

Another counterfeit refuge is ritual confidence. Men love ceremonies because ceremonies give the illusion of something objective they can hold in their hand. “I was baptized.” “I took communion.” “I went through confirmation.” “I prayed the prayer.” “I joined the church.” “I came to the altar.” “I got dedicated as a child.” “I was raised in the faith.” All of those things may have some place in the life of a true believer when rightly understood, but none of them can produce the new birth. The minute a man begins to trust the ritual instead of Christ, the ritual becomes a counterfeit refuge.

The Bible is unrelenting on this point. “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly” (Romans 2:28). “Neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh.” Paul goes straight for the heart of the issue. Outward sign is not inward reality. In the same way, Peter carefully guards against sacramental confusion when he says of baptism, “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Peter 3:21). Water can touch skin. It cannot regenerate the soul. Ceremony can symbolize truth. It cannot create truth. A man may come up out of a baptistry wet and still be dead in sins if he is trusting the ceremony instead of Christ.

This is one reason false conversions flourish in heavily ritualized settings. People are taught to rest in the visible act rather than in the finished work of the Saviour. They feel safe because something official happened to them, something memorable, something church-recognized, something sacred-looking. But the new birth nobody can fake is not dispensed through water, wafers, certificates, or institutional process. It comes through the incorruptible seed of the Word of God by the Spirit of God as the sinner believes on Christ. Ritual confidence is dangerous because it lets a man mistake outward participation for inward life. It gives him a false answer when he ought to be asking whether he has truly passed from death unto life.

5. Shallow Gospel Presentations Multiply False Professions

One of the great tragedies of modern evangelicalism is the way the gospel has been shrunk, softened, and simplified until men can “accept Jesus” without ever understanding what they are being saved from, who He is, what He did, or why they need the new birth at all. They are told that Jesus will help their life, heal their pain, improve their future, and give them peace, but they are not told enough about sin, wrath, death, repentance, faith, substitution, blood atonement, or the necessity of being born again. The result is that many

people respond to a sales pitch, not a gospel. They are sold improvement, not resurrection. Enhancement, not salvation.

Paul said, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). Preaching. Not marketing. Not manipulation. Not the strategic lowering of doctrinal content so nobody feels uncomfortable. When the gospel is thinned out to make decisions easier, false conversions multiply because men are not being confronted with the real issue. They are not seeing themselves as dead in trespasses and sins. They are not seeing Christ as the crucified and risen Lord who alone can save. They are not being brought to the end of themselves. They are being invited to add religion to their lives.

This is why churches can report masses of “decisions” while producing very little evidence of regeneration. The problem is not always insincerity in the hearers. Sometimes the hearers were never given enough truth to understand what was at stake. They were ushered into a moment of response without being grounded in the message through which God actually brings life. Then when nothing lasting appears, everybody still clings to the memory of the moment as though the moment itself were the new birth. That is not grace. That is confusion. Grace saves through truth. False assurance often enters when truth has been trimmed down to the point where the sinner can respond without ever facing God’s actual diagnosis of his condition.

6. Forms of Godliness Without Power Are Real

Paul warned Timothy about men “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5). That one line should end forever the naive notion that if something looks religious, it must be spiritually alive. A form of godliness means shape without substance, structure without life, appearance without power. It means the outlines of religion are present, but the life of God is absent. Such men may be moral, reverent, active, and publicly serious. They may oppose obvious wickedness and uphold certain standards. But they do not possess the power of God in salvation. The life that comes through the new birth is absent.

This distinction is crucial because many counterfeits are not easy to spot at first glance. Tares grow among wheat (Matthew 13:25). Wolves come in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15). The devil does not always advertise his counterfeits with horns and a pitchfork. He often wraps them in religion. The false convert may be easier to mistake for a Christian than the openly lost man. He may know enough truth to sound convincing. He may have enough morality to look upright. He may have enough zeal to shame lazy saints. But if the power of

regeneration is absent, all of it remains form. And form without power is one of the most dangerous things in the world because it teaches men to trust shadows.

This is why the church must not be gullible. Charity does not require stupidity. We do not need to become suspicion machines, doubting every saint who struggles. But neither are we commanded to treat every religious expression as proof of life. The Lord Himself warned us about counterfeits. The apostles warned us. Scripture warns us. Therefore the right response is not paranoia but discernment. We must learn to distinguish between the form of Christianity and the life of Christianity. That distinction does not contradict grace. It protects grace from being confused with empty profession.

7. The Answer to Counterfeits Is the Biblical Marks of the New Birth

If there are false conversions and religious counterfeits, then how do we avoid either gullibility or morbid introspection. The answer is not to invent a works-based checklist that turns assurance into a torture chamber. The answer is to come back again and again to the biblical marks of the new birth. Does a man have the Son. “He that hath the Son hath life” (1 John 5:12). Has he believed on Christ according to the gospel. Has the Word of God taken root. Is there evidence of life in the form of spiritual appetite, a changed relationship to sin, love for truth, an inward bent toward God, and the chastening dealings of the Father. Not perfection, but life. Not sinlessness, but reality. Not flawless performance, but inward change that manifests itself over time.

The new birth gives a new appetite. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word” (1 Peter 2:2). The new birth gives a new relation to righteousness and sin. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him” (1 John 3:9), meaning he cannot settle into sin as his untroubled element. The new birth produces love toward God’s people. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14). The new birth produces inward conflict against the flesh. The new birth produces response to truth. None of these things save. They are not the cause of life. They are evidences that life is present.

This is where pastoral balance matters. A struggling saint may see these marks in seed form and be unnecessarily tormented because he is looking for perfection instead of life. A false professor may have outward religion without any of these realities and yet feel secure because he is resting in culture, ritual, or past emotion. The answer for both is the same: return to Scripture. Let the Word of God define what the new birth is and what it produces. That way the counterfeit is exposed without grace being compromised. We do not save ourselves by works. But neither do we honor grace by pretending that dead religion and living regeneration are the same thing. They are not.

Conclusion

False conversions and religious counterfeits are real, and the Bible speaks of them with enough clarity that no church should pretend otherwise. Not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” belongs to Christ (Matthew 7:21). Not everyone with a form of godliness has the power of it (2 Timothy 3:5). Not every emotional response is the new birth. Not every church habit is life. Not every testimony is rooted in truth. There are tares among the wheat, and there are men who know the culture of Christianity without possessing the Christ of Christianity. That is not a pleasant truth, but it is a necessary one.

At the same time, this doctrine is not meant to throw genuine believers into endless paralysis. The answer is not to doubt every saint who struggles, because the true believer does struggle. The answer is not to demand perfection, because no saint in this life reaches sinless perfection. The answer is to distinguish between surface religion and the biblical marks of regeneration. Where there is life, there will be signs of life. There will be some appetite for truth, some changed relation to sin, some response to God, some evidence of the Spirit’s work, and some inward reality that cannot be reduced to church performance.

So let this chapter do what it ought to do. Let it strip away false refuges. Let it expose emotionalism without root, ritual confidence without Christ, church culture without life, and shallow profession without regeneration. But let it also drive the sinner and the saint alike back to the Word of God and the Son of God. The answer to counterfeits is not legalism. It is reality. The answer is not works righteousness. It is the new birth nobody can fake. And when that birth is present, the life of Christ will, in time and truth, distinguish itself from every religious imitation.

10 of 10: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake – The Greatest Miracle God Performs in a Sinner

Introduction

Men are always chasing miracles they can see with their natural eyes. They want fire from heaven, signs in the sky, gold dust in the air, bodies healed on command, demons screaming on cue, spectacles on a stage, and enough visible excitement to make them feel like they have brushed against power. That appetite is not new. It is as old as fallen flesh. The natural man has always been impressed by what glitters, shakes, shouts, startles, and stuns. But the greatest miracle God performs in a sinner is not giving him a chill up his spine, a story for his friends, or a dramatic religious memory he can talk about for thirty

years. The greatest miracle God performs in a sinner is to take a man who is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1) and make him alive in Jesus Christ. That is a miracle greater than a blind eye opening, greater than a lame foot walking, greater than a fever breaking, because it does not merely affect a few years of earthly life. It changes a man’s eternal condition forever.

That is what this whole series has been driving toward. The new birth is not a slogan, not a religious cliché, not a denominational catchphrase, and not the pet theme of revivalists who wanted to stir up a crowd. It came from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself: “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). That sentence did not come from a nervous preacher trying to manipulate an altar call. It came from the Son of God speaking to a religious ruler who had morality, education, and scriptural familiarity, but no life. Christ did not tell Nicodemus he needed a better routine, a stronger devotion, a sharper mind, or a cleaner record. He told him he needed a birth from above. That means the issue in salvation was never religious improvement. It was always life. It was always resurrection. It was always God doing what man cannot do for himself.

So this closing essay must rise high enough to gather all the strands together. The necessity of the new birth, the impossibility of religion producing it, the incorruptible seed of the Word, the radical distinction between flesh and Spirit, the visible signs of life, the inward war of two natures, the security of a birth that cannot be undone, and the danger of false conversion—all of it converges here. The central truth is this: the greatest miracle God performs in time is the regeneration of a sinner by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ. That truth ought to humble the proud, comfort the saved, expose the counterfeit, and call the lost man out of every false refuge. For the religious man who has trusted everything but Christ, this essay must end as a warning. For the sinner who finally sees he cannot fix himself, it must end as an invitation. What you need is not improvement. What you need is life.

1. The Greatest Miracle Is Not Outward Spectacle but Inward Resurrection

The natural man always wants a miracle he can measure with his senses. He wants something he can photograph, package, replay, monetize, and parade in front of people. That is why crowds followed Jesus for loaves and fishes, healings and signs, while missing the far greater reality standing in front of them. Even when the Lord gave visible miracles, those miracles were not ends in themselves. They were signs pointing to who He was and what He could do in the deepest sense. When He raised Lazarus physically, He was showing that He is “the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25). When He healed the blind, He was showing that He gives sight in more than one realm. When He cleansed lepers, He

was showing He can cleanse what no man can cleanse. But still the crowd kept chasing the visible while missing the eternal.

That same blindness fills modern religion. People will travel miles to see a spectacle and sit under clownish nonsense if they think power is in the room. Yet many of those same people will yawn through the preaching of the new birth. They will be thrilled by stories of signs and wonders while remaining unmoved by the fact that God takes a hell-bound sinner and gives him eternal life through Jesus Christ. That is backwards. It is upside down. The opening of a blind eye is a mercy in time. The new birth is life for eternity. The straightening of a crippled leg may give a man some years of mobility. Regeneration gives him a standing before God, a place in the family, and a life that shall never perish. One touches the body. The other touches the soul forever.

That is why Scripture uses resurrection language for salvation. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5). “Is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). That is miracle language. That is the language of God breaking the reign of death and creating life where there was none. Men may still chase visible wonders if they want to, but heaven is not confused about where the great work lies. The greatest miracle God performs in a sinner is to raise him spiritually from the dead.

2. The Necessity of the New Birth Shows the Depth of Man’s Ruin

If the new birth is the greatest miracle, it is because man’s condition is worse than religion ever admits. Men do not need a birth if they are merely bruised. They do not need resurrection if they are merely confused. They do not need quickening if they are merely immature. The very necessity of the new birth proves how ruined man is by nature. Jesus did not say Nicodemus needed refinement. He said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Not may struggle to see it. Cannot see it. That is total inability. That is spiritual blindness rooted in a condition so serious that only a birth from above can answer it.

This is the point religion keeps trying to dodge. Religion wants to preserve some dignity for the old man. It wants to tell him he is sick instead of dead, misguided instead of condemned, unfinished instead of fallen, and capable of assisting in his own rescue if given enough help. But the Lord never flattered Adam. He exposed him. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). Flesh remains flesh no matter how polished, educated, restrained, or ceremonial it becomes. That means the need is not cosmetic. The need is absolute. The sinner must have what he does not possess by his first birth.

This necessity is what makes the gospel so offensive to pride and so glorious to faith. It offends pride because it tells man he is beyond self-repair. It glorifies grace because it tells the sinner that God has done what man could never do. The new birth is necessary precisely because the old nature cannot be improved into acceptability before God. The miracle is great because the ruin is deep. Until a man understands the ruin, he will never appreciate the miracle.

3. Religion Cannot Produce What Only God Can Give

This whole series has hammered one truth over and over because it must be hammered: religion cannot produce the new birth. It can produce form, ceremony, vocabulary, conformity, and emotional moments. It can produce church attendance, moral restraint, denominational loyalty, and public respectability. But it cannot create life. It can polish the outside of the cup and leave the inside filthy. It can whiten the sepulchre while the bones remain dead. It can train a man to stand, sit, speak, sing, and serve in Christian culture without ever giving him Christ. That is why Jesus spoke as sharply as He did to Nicodemus. He aimed the doctrine of the new birth straight at a man rich in religion and empty of life.

Paul's warning about men "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5) belongs right here. The tragedy of dead religion is not that it looks ugly. It often looks impressive. It often looks disciplined, devoted, serious, and sincere. That is what makes it deadly. It lets a man rest in the machinery of religion instead of coming to the Lord Jesus Christ for life. Ritual confidence, family tradition, church culture, emotional response, and denominational identity all become substitute refuges where a man hides from the one thing he actually needs: regeneration.

The greatness of the new birth shines brightest when set against the bankruptcy of religion. Men may trust baptism, sacraments, catechism, church membership, spiritual heritage, or moral reform, but none of those things can resurrect the dead spirit. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). There is the whole matter. Mercy saved. Regeneration washed. The Holy Ghost renewed. God gave what religion cannot manufacture. That is miracle territory.

4. The Word of God Is the Seed of This Miracle

The new birth is not mystical fog. It is tied to the Word of God. "Being born again... by the word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). That means God did not leave regeneration floating in religious atmosphere. He connected it to truth. He attached it to the incorruptible seed of His own Word. Men are not born again by mood, music, crowd pressure, or sentimental religious atmosphere. They are

born again as the Spirit of God takes the Word of God and applies it to the heart in power, bringing the sinner to faith in Jesus Christ.

That makes preaching weighty in a way modern religion has forgotten. The pulpit is not a stage for personal branding, entertainment, or therapeutic banter. It is a place where the incorruptible seed is to be sown. If the seed is removed, the birth is obscured. If the gospel is corrupted, the miracle is clouded. If the Book is sidelined, men may still be emotionally affected, but they are not being given what God chose to use in bringing life. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). That verse does not need improvement. It needs believing.

This is also why the devil wars against Scripture with such relentless hatred. He knows the seed is in the Word. He knows if he can corrupt, cloud, or replace the truth, he can populate churches with religious motion while starving souls of life. That is why the church must never apologize for preaching, never downgrade doctrine, and never treat the words of God as optional accessories to spiritual experience. The new birth is a miracle, yes, but it is a miracle God performs through the instrument of His own revealed truth.

5. The Life God Gives Produces Real Effects

If the new birth is real, then it is not imaginary in its results. It begins inwardly, but it does not remain hidden forever. Life shows itself. A newborn baby breathes, hungers, cries, and responds. A living tree bears fruit in season. In the same way, the life of God in the soul produces effects. Not sinless perfection, not instant maturity, not flawless conduct, but real life. There is a new inward bent toward God, a new appetite for the Word, a changed relationship to sin, a capacity to respond to truth, and the chastening hand of the Father dealing with the believer as a son.

That is why the born-again man cannot stay the same. Not because he saves himself by reform, but because life alters him. He may still stumble, fight lust, wrestle with pride, battle discouragement, and need correction, but he cannot remain entirely at peace in the old life the way he once did. The seed remains in him. The inward man now delights in the law of God. The Spirit wars against the flesh. These things do not make him perfect. They make him alive. The old silence of spiritual death is broken. The battlefield has begun.

This is where the doctrine becomes both searching and comforting. It searches because it exposes dead professions that have all the outer shape of religion without the inner marks of life. It comforts because it explains to struggling believers why they now feel grief over sin, hunger for truth, and inward conflict they did not understand before. Those things are not proof that the new birth failed. They are often proof that the new birth took place. The miracle is real enough to create a war where there was once dead stillness.

6. The Miracle Includes Preservation, Not Just Beginning

The greatness of the new birth is not only seen in its beginning but in its permanence. God does not give eternal life as a temporary experiment. He does not bring a man into His family on probation. He gives life that is eternal, sonship that is real, and a seal that endures “unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30). That is why the title of the eighth essay mattered so much: eternal life cannot be unborn. If the believer has truly been born of God, the relationship established by that birth cannot be reversed by human failure.

That does not make sin light. It makes grace glorious and chastening serious. Fellowship can be broken. Joy can be lost. Rewards can be forfeited. Testimony can be ruined. God can chasten His child severely. But the birth stands because the birth is His work. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God” (1 John 3:2). “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish” (John 10:28). That is not weak theology. That is the plain force of Christ’s own words. The same miracle that begins the believer’s life preserves the believer’s standing in Christ.

This matters because if the new birth could be undone by human inconsistency, then the glory of the miracle would be reduced to the durability of the sinner. But salvation is not a monument to the sinner’s strength. It is a monument to God’s grace. The greatest miracle God performs in a sinner is not a half-finished project that hangs forever in suspense. It is a work of life, sonship, and preservation grounded in Christ and applied by the Spirit. That is why the miracle is so great. It does not merely start something. It secures something eternal.

7. Counterfeits Make the Real Miracle More Precious

The existence of false conversions does not weaken the doctrine of the new birth. It magnifies it. There are counterfeits precisely because there is something real worth imitating. The devil is not wasting time manufacturing fake unicorns. He counterfeits what God has made central. That is why there are tares among the wheat, forms of godliness without power, and false professions built on ritual confidence, emotionalism, shallow gospel presentations, and church culture imitation. Men can mimic the sounds, habits, and appearances of Christianity without possessing the life of Christ.

But the counterfeit cannot produce what the real miracle produces. It cannot give spiritual life. It cannot create a new inward bent toward God. It cannot implant the incorruptible seed. It cannot seal the soul unto the day of redemption. It cannot create the inward war between flesh and Spirit. It cannot give eternal life. It can imitate surface religion, but it cannot generate the life of God in the soul of a man. That is why the existence of

counterfeits should not drive the church into skepticism about every profession. It should drive the church back to biblical definitions of the new birth.

And that brings this series to its climactic note. The real miracle is not found in noise, hype, ritual, or spectacle. The real miracle is found where God takes a dead sinner, exposes the bankruptcy of his flesh, strips away his religious refuges, plants the incorruptible seed of His Word, grants him life through faith in Jesus Christ, begins manifesting that life in real ways, preserves him by grace, and distinguishes that work from every counterfeit the flesh can manufacture. That is the miracle no man can fake and no devil can reproduce.

Conclusion

The new birth nobody can fake is the greatest miracle God performs in a sinner because it reaches deeper than every outward wonder and lasts longer than every earthly deliverance. It is greater than bodily healing because it gives eternal life. It is greater than emotional experience because it brings real regeneration. It is greater than religious reform because it creates a new creature in Christ. It is greater than ceremony because it is born of God. A sinner dead in trespasses and sins is made alive. A man blind to the kingdom passes from death unto life. A rebel in Adam is brought into the family of God. Heaven sees that miracle for what it is, even when earth is busy chasing cheaper spectacles.

So let this final word stand as both warning and invitation. If you are a religious man who has trusted your church, your baptism, your past decision, your moral life, your doctrinal vocabulary, your family background, or your religious activity while remaining a stranger to the life of God, then take the warning seriously. Not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” belongs to Him. Not every emotional moment is the new birth. Not every outward form carries the power of God. If you have trusted everything but Christ, then your refuge is false, however polished it may look. The kingdom of God does not open to the flesh, to ceremony, or to counterfeit profession. “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7).

And if you are the sinner who now sees the truth, then hear the invitation. What you need is not improvement. What you need is not one more round of self-repair. What you need is not a better religious performance. What you need is life. Christ said, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life” (John 5:24). Receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust the One who died for your sins, was buried, and rose again. Stop trying to fix what God has already condemned in the flesh, and come to the One who gives life from above. The greatest miracle God performs in a sinner is still being performed right now, and it is performed through Jesus Christ.

Conclusion to the Series: The New Birth Nobody Can Fake

After walking through this series, the central truth ought to stand clearer, stronger, and sharper than it did at the beginning: the new birth is not a religious phrase, not a church cliché, and not a dramatic way of describing moral improvement. It is the miracle of God giving life to a sinner who had none. It is the difference between flesh and Spirit, between Adam and Christ, between outward religion and inward reality, between dead form and living power. Everything we have covered keeps coming back to that one blazing center. Jesus Christ did not tell Nicodemus to become more disciplined, more ceremonial, more sincere, or more intellectually refined. He told him, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). That necessity has not changed. Men still try to hide behind church membership, doctrinal vocabulary, spiritual atmosphere, emotional moments, family tradition, water rituals, and public morality, but none of those things can create divine life. Only God can do that. And because only God can do it, the new birth remains one of the greatest dividing lines in all of Scripture. It separates the saved from the merely religious, the possessor from the professor, the living from the dead, and the true Christian from the polished counterfeit.

This series should also leave the believer with a stronger understanding of what actually happened when God saved him. If you have truly been born again, then what happened to you was far greater than joining a religion or making a spiritual adjustment. You passed from death unto life. You were born of God. You were given eternal life in Jesus Christ. You were sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. You were brought into the family of God in a relationship that cannot be undone by human failure. At the same time, you were not made sinless in practice, and you were not stripped of the flesh in this life. That is why the struggle remains. That is why the conflict between the two natures is real. That is why chastening comes, why growth is needed, why spiritual appetite matters, and why the Christian life often feels like a war. But now, after studying this series, the believer should be able to say with greater clarity that the war is not proof the new birth failed. It is one of the evidences that the new birth took place. The old dead peace with sin has been broken. The inward man now answers to God. The Word of God now feeds life instead of merely informing the mind. Sin now grieves where it once ruled in quiet. The saint may still stumble, but he cannot remain what he was.

So what does this mean now for the believer after studying this series. It means first that he should stand in deeper gratitude and greater wonder at his salvation. He should stop speaking of it like a small thing and remember that the new birth is one of the greatest miracles God performs in time. It means second that he should walk with stronger assurance, not because of his own performance, but because eternal life cannot be unborn and the Father does not abandon His children. It means third that he should take

sin more seriously, not less seriously, because sin breaks fellowship, brings chastening, damages testimony, and grieves the Holy Spirit, even though it cannot undo the birth God gave. It means fourth that he should love the Word of God more than ever, because the incorruptible seed that brought life is the same truth by which he now grows. And it means finally that he should become more discerning, both about his own walk and about the religious world around him, refusing to confuse outward performance with inward reality ever again. If this series has done what it ought to do, then the believer should now be steadier in doctrine, humbler in spirit, more alert to counterfeits, more patient with struggling saints, more confident in grace, more serious about holiness, and more amazed than ever that God would take a dead sinner and make him alive in Jesus Christ. That is what the new birth means, and that is why nobody can fake it.



THE NEW BIRTH NOBODY CAN FAKE

A BIBLICAL STUDY OF REGENERATION, REALITY, AND ETERNAL LIFE

"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN." JOHN 3:7

<p>THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL</p> <p>The new birth is not religious improvement. It is a miracle of God giving life to a sinner who was dead in trespasses and sins through Jesus Christ.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EPHESIANS 2:1,5</p>  <p>MAN'S CONDITION BEFORE THE NEW BIRTH</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td> Dead in trespasses</td><td style="text-align: right;">Ephesians 2:1</td></tr> <tr><td> Blind to spiritual truth</td><td style="text-align: right;">1 Corinthians 2:14</td></tr> <tr><td> Enslaved to sin</td><td style="text-align: right;">John 8:34</td></tr> <tr><td> Hard heart toward God</td><td style="text-align: right;">Ezekiel 36:26</td></tr> <tr><td> Separated from God</td><td style="text-align: right;">Isaiah 59:2</td></tr> </table> <p>GOD'S WORK IN REGENERATION</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td> Mercy saves</td><td style="text-align: right;">Titus 3:5</td></tr> <tr><td> Spirit quickens</td><td style="text-align: right;">Ephesians 2:5</td></tr> <tr><td> Word implants life</td><td style="text-align: right;">James 1:18</td></tr> <tr><td> Faith receives Christ</td><td style="text-align: right;">Ephesians 2:8-9</td></tr> <tr><td> Believer is sealed</td><td style="text-align: right;">Ephesians 1:13</td></tr> </table>	 Dead in trespasses	Ephesians 2:1	 Blind to spiritual truth	1 Corinthians 2:14	 Enslaved to sin	John 8:34	 Hard heart toward God	Ezekiel 36:26	 Separated from God	Isaiah 59:2	 Mercy saves	Titus 3:5	 Spirit quickens	Ephesians 2:5	 Word implants life	James 1:18	 Faith receives Christ	Ephesians 2:8-9	 Believer is sealed	Ephesians 1:13	<p>THE 10 KEY TRUTHS OF THE NEW BIRTH</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; 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Not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" shall enter. Emotions are not the new birth. External baptism does not save. Church membership does not equal salvation. Examine yourself whether ye be in the faith. <p style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small;">2 Corinthians 13:5</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: blue; color: white; padding: 5px;">INVITATION TO THE LOST</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">You cannot fix yourself. You cannot earn salvation. You need life. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:13</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: white; font-weight: bold;">CALL ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST TODAY!</p>	RELIGION (DEAD FORM)	REGENERATION (NEW BIRTH)	 Trusts in works	 Trusts in Christ	 Changes behavior outwardly	 Changes nature inwardly	 Seeks recognition from men	 Seeks fellowship with God	 Depends on denomination	 Depends on Christ alone	 Temporary excitement	 Eternal life
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"AS MANY AS RECEIVED HIM, TO THEM GAVE HE POWER TO BECOME THE SONS OF GOD, EVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE ON HIS NAME." JOHN 1:12