

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

by John Michael Nolt

Being born again is a spiritual transformation, where one is reborn into a new life in Christ, with a clean heart and a renewed spirit.

Duration: 37:45

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:25-29, Matthew 18:3, John 3:3, Acts 16:30-31, Romans 10:9

Topics: "Spiritual Rebirth", "Personal Conversion"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need for individuals to be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God. The sermon focuses on a person who responds to an evangelistic message and acknowledges their sins, including lying and hatred. The preacher encourages the individual to confess all their sins and experience the joy of forgiveness. The sermon also highlights the importance of personal growth and transformation as one becomes converted and leaves behind the works of the flesh.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the freewill offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Well, we welcome each of you to our service this morning.

It's a blessing to see each of you. I realize our group is a little smaller this morning, but the presence of God is among us. So let's worship Him in spirit and in truth.

We welcome the visitors with us. We trust that you have come with your cups turned right side up, ready to receive the water that God has for us this morning. Before we continue with the message, let's fall on our knees.

And I'm going to open it up for any of the brethren that would like to lead out in prayer. Let's kneel together. John, chapter 3. Yesterday morning I came to the church here and I had another message

planned.

And I got on my knees before God and I said, Lord, is this the message you want for me to preach? And you know, He changed it all. And brought my attention to John, chapter 3. The title of the message is, What does it mean to be born again? We hear a lot about being born again. And we encourage it.

We love it. We love to hear when people get born again. But what does it mean to be born again? Are you born again this morning? Do you know what it is to have the new birth? Do you know what it is that you can tell other people? I've been born again.

I've been bought with a price. Well, this morning we're going to look at what does it mean to be born again. Begin reading with verse 1 of chapter 3 of John.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God. For no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

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. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I say unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Well, we're going to look at these verses and I'm going to have a little teaching lesson this morning. And I plan on putting a little diagram on the board. I enjoy diagramming and trying to get a message across.

But what does it mean to be born again? Well, one thing we want to remember is that the new birth or being born again is the key to the entrance of a person into the family of God. A person needs to be born again to be a part of the family of Jesus Christ. And we're going to somewhat combine like conversion, new birth, regeneration, all together a little bit in a package this morning.

And we're going to find out what it is when a person is born again. If you ask someone, are you born again? I get some answers like this. Well, I'm not sure if I'm born again.

I don't know if I'm born again. How do you know if you're born again? And then there's some, when you talk to them, they say, well, we never heard anything taught like it about being born again. Well, this morning, I trust by God that we're going to make a clear line so that you can know if you're born again or not.

What does it mean to be born again? I'm going to draw on the board here three different hearts. And we're going to look at what Jesus had to say to Nicodemus. Nicodemus came to Jesus and he asked the question.

He said, we know that thou art a teacher from God, because who can do these miracles? If it wouldn't be for God, you wouldn't be able to do them. And then Jesus answered him and said, verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. And Nicodemus right away, when Jesus talked about being born again, thought of the natural birth.

And he asked Jesus the question, how can a man, when he's a full-grown man, how can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Well, Jesus talked about another birth and it's very parallel to the natural birth. But it's spiritual. It's not a natural birth.

It's something that is divine. It takes more than something that is physical for it to happen. So, Nicodemus, he just shook his head and he said, well, how can these things be? And Jesus said, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

Or he cannot enter. The reason sometimes that some people's vision seems so dim about the things of God is because they do not know what it is to be born again. When a person is born again, he's able to see the Kingdom of God.

He's able to see the power of God. And he's able to realize that his sins are cleansed and that he is made clean before God. We're going to... I'm not a good artist, but we're going to put in some arteries.

That's heart number one. And we're going to draw another heart. They're not alike, but we're going to draw the third heart.

Now, turn to Galatians 5. We're going to look at an unconverted heart first. And I'm not going to take the time to draw or to write all the names of the different sins that can be in an unconverted heart. But we'll just name a few like lying, hatred, envy.

And we could name a bunch of others that go with that. Now, I'm going to ask you if this is what it means to be born again. Here's a heart that is full of Galatians 5 that is showing forth the fruit of the flesh or showing forth the flesh.

Find it here. Verse 19 of chapter 5. Now, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery and so forth. Here's a heart that is full of all those works of the flesh.

Now, as this individual is growing, they start out as a child with the sinful nature. As they get older, they realize that they can get away with lying. They can have hatred in their heart.

They can have envy. They can have bitterness. And I'm going to use some of our backgrounds so that we can identify with it.

As this person gets to be a teenager, he realizes that something needs to change. But the church that he's a part of says, well, when you begin to feel a little uneasier, when you get to a certain age, what you need to do is start coming to instruction class because that's your problem. You come to instruction class and you become a member of a church.

That will take care of the struggle that you're having. Is that the new birth? That is not the new birth. So, here we have an individual that is full of Galatians 5. Corrupt.

An unconverted heart. And yet, they're becoming members of churches. They're becoming ministers of churches.

They're becoming leaders. They're becoming fathers of these churches. And they're not converted.

They do not have the joy of the Lord in their heart. That is not what it means to be born again. Now, we're going to look at the second heart.

We can put lying also in here. Hatred and so forth. The second individual here is also corrupt in his heart.

And maybe in their teens, early teens, maybe they're sitting through an evangelistic message. And they become convicted and saying, well, something's just not right with me. Something's wrong.

What must I do to be saved? The preaching is good and it's made clear and dry. You know, clear cut that you need to be born again in order to enter into seeing the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God. So, this individual responds at an evangelistic message.

And they're counseled and they have all these sins. Notice, there's more in here. That heart is just full of sin.

It's corrupt. There's a lot of sin there that needs to be taken care of. So, they respond and then they're asked the question, why did you respond at revival meetings? Well, I need to be a Christian.

And I'm a sinner and I need to be saved. Well, what are some of the areas of your sins? Well, they confess lying. Lying is taken care of, but all these other sins are in there.

And they'll say, well, I had some hatred in my life. So, hatred is confessed and taken care of. And then they soon say, well, you know, I'm just a sinner.

So, the person that's helping them says, well, all you need to do is accept Jesus Christ into your heart and then you're born again. Now, a question I have, can Jesus Christ enter into a heart or the Holy Spirit into a heart that has sin there that's not confessed? Is that being born again? Is that what that is? When a person just makes a general prayer and says I'm a sinner, I know I'm a sinner, and they confessed a few sins, they feel somewhat of a relief because of some of their sins being taken care of, but yet they don't have the fullness of God and the Holy Spirit coming in and dwelling in their heart because there's sin there. God cannot dwell in the heart of sin.

In a heart of sin, He cannot enter into that heart. So, what they're given is a false assurance saying, well, you're a sinner. You're a Christian.

And yet, they know that they have hidden sin in their life. And they only confessed a few, but there's still a bunch of others. And as they continue to grow and through their teen years, what you will find is they will start adding some more sins.

Maybe this lying comes back again. Or maybe this hatred. Or maybe the envy.

It all comes back again. And then they become frustrated in saying, well, I thought I was born again. And yet, here I am struggling and struggling and I just can't find freedom from it.

Well, was that person ever born again? Let's look at heart number three. This person. And we're going to go down about five or six different points.

Here's another heart that is full of hatred. A heart that is unconverted. A heart that is full of sin.

And we're going to find out what it really means to be born again. And by the way, this one here is the condition of a lot of people today that call themselves Christians. They have a false assurance in their heart because they thought, well, I confess my sin or some of them.

And, you know, I'm a member now of a church. I've been baptized. Does that take care of sin? Remember, if there is no change, there's no conversion.

If there's no change, there's no new birth. And there's a lot of people, myself, others, that we had a peace when we first of all made that first commitment. It's true we wanted to do what was right.

But yet, we did not confess every sin. We just made a general prayer and said, well, I'm sorry for my sin. But we're going to get into the Scripture and find out what it is in order to be born again.

In order for it to, you know, be born into a new birth spiritually. So here's a heart. Number three, the heart is the same as the others.

It's lying. The heart is lying. It's cheating.

It's making light of God. But here comes the Holy Spirit and starts convicting. Point number one, is the Holy Spirit begins working on the outside of this individual and is knocking at the door and is saying, I want into your heart.

And the person becomes convicted. Number one, conviction. Let's turn to 1 John.

1 John 3, verses 20-21, For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than a heart and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence towards God. Is your heart condemning you this morning? Do you feel condemned? If you feel condemned, it's time that you look at your heart.

Because the Bible tells us here that if our heart condemns us, God is greater than a heart and knoweth all things. But if our heart doesn't condemn us, then it shows that we're at peace with God. So, is your heart condemning you? Remember, conviction.

Conviction comes upon an individual and there's people that can sit for years under conviction and yet do nothing about it. Remember, are you under conviction? Or ask yourself the question, are you under conviction? Are you feeling burdened? Are you feeling like things aren't just going right? Do you feel like a failure? What is the answer? Is your heart condemning you this morning? Or are you able to say that my heart does not condemn me? I'm at peace with God and I have a clear heaven above me. So, the first one we like to look at is number one, conviction.

The Holy Spirit, God, starts knocking on the heart of that individual and is saying, I want to be in your heart. I want to have control of your life. Not Satan.

I don't want him to be in control of your heart. But I want to be in that heart. I want to take control of your life.

So, there comes conviction. When conviction, when people are under conviction that they finally get to the point they're tired of it and are willing to give up, then comes godly sorrow. To be sorry for your sins.

There comes sorrow. So here's this individual. He has all this sin in his life and he's been convicted and he's tired of it and he becomes sorry for all his sins that he ever committed.

But now, how is he going to take care of them? You know, all these sins. You know, in counseling people and in a lot of our own testimonies, when we see ourselves for really who we are and we become sorrowful, it looks hopeless that God can save us. I mean, we feel like a sinner.

We feel that, you know, I'm not worth anything. And Lord, I'm sorry for all those things I've done. Lord, I need help.

I need help. I can't do it myself. It's a person that comes before God and says, Lord, I can't do it myself.

But You have to do it for me. You have to do the cleansing. Number three is confession.

When there is godly sorrow, then comes confession. Let's turn to Proverbs 28, verse 13. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

There's two things that go hand in hand here. In order to be able to forsake your sin, you need to confess it. It goes joint together.

If you're going to cover your sins, you're not going to prosper. But when you confess, after you confess your sin, only then will you be able to forsake it. In our human nature, we try to forsake sin without confessing it.

It will not work. We need to confess it. Let's turn to 1 John 1.9. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

A heart that is able to confess. The word confess means make it known with your mouth. And I'm not saying you cannot get right with God in your own closet.

But as I have watched people that have come to know the Lord Jesus in an intimate way, is when they got desperate and they started confessing sin specifically one after the other. And that's why I'm not against a general prayer because that is a step. But I think for a person to have a true, clear conscience before God, they need to be specific in their sins and confess them to God one at a time.

So, you get desperate before God and you confess your lying. And then you pray, Lord, what else? And this could take a whole half hour, a whole hour, until the Lord works step by step through your life. Okay? Lord, I'm tired of lying.

Please forgive it. I renounce it. And I claim the blood of Jesus Christ.

I renounce it in the name of Jesus. I want no parts to do with it, Lord. I want to forsake it.

And when you're done praying that, then the Lord will reveal another one to you. And you take care of all those sins that need to be taken care of before Jesus Christ can come into this heart to dwell there. So, we're taking care of all these sins.

I'm erasing them off the board. And the Lord keeps revealing sin after sin. Those are the arteries there.

Until you have a heart that is pure. A heart that is clean. And I'm not saying you'll remember everything at that time.

You know, a week later, sometimes the Lord can come and touch a finger on an area of your life and say, John Michael, you have never confessed that. But, I think what the Lord is concerned about is when we

start cleaning up our lives that we take care of everything that comes to our mind. But supposing now there's an area here.

Maybe it's lust. That's too embarrassing to confess to the one that's helping you or your wife. And you just keep that in there.

But everything else you confess. What will that do to you? Will Jesus be able to come in and dwell in that heart? No. It's true He can do work.

He can do work in our heart. He might be working from the outside and saying, you know, there's a sin in there yet that I need to get rid of before I can come into this heart because I'm pure. I'm holy.

I can't dwell where there's sin. And we feel the Lord working on the outside. And He's trying to come in.

But we are not willing to confess this one thing. And this one thing can hinder Christians or people for years because they're not ready to stand up and say, I've been involved in this thing. It's embarrassing.

And my wife and I had the privilege of Thursday evening helping a young girl through this. And I guess that's why the Lord laid it on my heart. And I kept asking her.

And I kept, you know, are you clear? Have you confessed everything? And she could not answer an honest yes. An honest yes. And then she had something that she needed to confess that was almost too embarrassing for her to confess.

But when she confessed it, her heart was clean. There was one area that was holding her back. She was willing to, you know, share with me all the other things, like, you know, the simple things what we like to confess, you know.

But sometimes the inner heart, that inner, you know, that we like to keep to ourselves. No, no one needs to know that. I'll just take care of that between God and I. But you know, if you want true freedom, the Bible says to confess with our mouth, one to another, because if we do not confess it and make it public to another individual or to your wife or someone, you're not going to be able to forsake it.

You're going to try. You're going to... You know, that's why we're part of a brotherhood. So that we can help each other.

It's important that we can, you know, share hearts with each other so that we can have our sin forgiven and that we can be pure. So, finally we got desperate enough and we confessed that thing that was between us and God. Now the Lord says, I can come and I can dwell in your heart.

Isn't that a blessing? To be able to confess sin. And we kept telling this young lady, go the whole way. You're part way there.

Go the rest of the way. Sometimes it takes a little coaching. Finally she said, it's too terrible.

And I said, well confess it. You won't have peace. You won't have joy in your heart because of that one area that you're keeping.

And finally it came out and she was able to have a clean heart and to be pure before God. So there needs to be confession. Also, another area along that line would be number four is there needs to be renouncing

of certain things.

Renouncing. And that means just forsaking it. And one of the blessings that I love to hear people pray is, Lord, I'm going to forsake the world.

I want nothing to do with it. And be specific of areas, of strongholds, of areas in your life. And we can look at Romans 6 too about forsaking it for the cause of Christ.

That He can have the preeminence in our hearts and not that we want to follow ourselves. Along with that, it could be our will that keeps us back from allowing God to come in. Remember, our will needs to be dead.

We need to let it lie and let Jesus pick that up. Or maybe it's envy. Maybe we have bitterness in our heart this morning.

Or maybe we have some things down here in the corner that we don't want anyone to know about and we're going to protect them. Remember, the light of Jesus Christ shines into the bottom part of our heart. He knows what is there.

He knows that. This morning, are you keeping some things in your heart that are not to be there? Remember, if you're going to walk with Jesus Christ and have a clear testimony for Him, you're going to need to confess those areas that are too embarrassing to confess. And when you do that, there will be a joy in your heart that will pass all understanding.

No one can comprehend it unless it's those that know what it is to be forgiven. Number five. Now that we could have conversion... I'm binding all this together.

We could take each one at a time. A person that has cleaned their heart becomes converted. He becomes a change.

He's converted from his old life into his new life. And we're going to talk number five, accepting the Lord into our heart. The Bible tells us that how can a person be drawn to the Lord except the Father draw him? And we see that.

The Lord is working and is drawing that person. Now that the heart is clean, only now can Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, come into that heart and to dwell there. And we need to accept Him.

And I feel just like the Bible tells us that Jesus or the Father knows how to give good gifts so much more to them that ask of the Holy Spirit. And I feel, you know, to ask Jesus into your life through that prayer. And I'm going to use this girl as an illustration.

I said, is your heart clean? She said, yes, it's clean, but it's not complete. I said, okay. Let's get on our knees again and let's ask Jesus Christ to come into your life.

Your heart is clean. Only now can He come in. And when she asked Him to come in, her prayer changed.

She started thanking Jesus for saving her. And you know, that sin was able to be removed. Her prayer just changed.

And I could tell that she was different. That there was something that she had now that she did not have before. And when she got up from praying, she had tears running down her cheeks, and she said, I never had anything like this.

She said, no one has ever helped me before to renounce and to confess all sin. She said, I made general prayers and it never helped. So the importance, I want to stress that, the importance of confessing our sins.

The Bible before, one of those verses, it mentions sins. Not just mentioning that you're a sinner, but that you mention and confess your sins. It's plural.

That you be specific and name them. So you accept the Lord into your heart. Number six, the Holy Spirit comes in and dwells in there.

And we could have a subject message on the Holy Spirit. 1 John 3.8 He's our Comforter. He guides us in all truth.

Oh, what a blessing. Do you know what it is to have friendship with God? Do you know what it is to be Holy Spirit led? Do you know what it is to be comforted? Do you know what it is to be guided into all truth? 1 John 3.8 He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifest, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, we have destroyed the work of the devil. That verse means of a continuing or living in sin. Now that Jesus Christ is in here, instead of Jesus Christ trying to work from the outside in, now He's on the inside.

And He's going to work outward. That when a temptation comes, the Holy Spirit will reveal it to us that we're not to yield to that temptation. And if we do find ourselves committing a sin, He will convict us and we will not let that sin in there.

We will get rid of it and confess it. That's what it is to be Holy Spirit guided. The Holy Spirit, or Jesus Christ, is working on the inside now.

He's not having to work from the outside. But He's working from the inside now, working out. And He's fighting our battles for us.

Remember, the children of Israel, when they won their battles is always when Jesus Christ, or when God was fighting the battle for them. When they started fighting their own battles, they always lost. So it is in the Christian life.

If you're going to start fighting your own battles and say to yourself, I have the power to do it, you're going to lose. But when you let Jesus Christ to come in and let Him fight your battles, then there's victory through Him. Number seven and our last one.

I'm rushing through this. Number seven. When everything is taken care of, all these sins were erased, Jesus Christ comes in.

Then comes a wonderful blessing of the assurance of salvation. Because you know that everything is taken care of and that you're at peace with God. You know you're ready to die.

You know you're ready to meet your Maker. That blessed peace comes upon that heart and it says, I'm free. And they have the assurance of salvation.

We can know if we're saved. The Bible says, for we know if we know. And hereby we do know in 1 John, the whole way through, there's about seven or eight, that we can know if we're saved or not.

Or if we're born again or a Christian. So the blessed joy of the assurance of salvation comes into that heart because there's no sin. There's no corner in here that they're hiding.

But there's the assurance of salvation floods that soul and it makes that person dynamic for the Lord and that they have a clear testimony that they can share with others that convicts others that do not have the assurance of salvation and that their hearts are not clear. And I trust this morning or I pray that if you're here this morning and you have sin that you're trying to protect, my prayer was that this message will convict you that you will want the blessing of the assurance of salvation. Do you know that if Christ would come today that you would get to heaven? That question that is always asked by Brother Denny when he baptizes someone.

If you die right now, would you go to heaven? I'm asking each one of you that personally this morning. If you died right now, would you go to heaven? The assurance of salvation. The blessing of it.

There's some that do not teach the assurance of salvation, saying you can't know. And then there's those that give the false assurance of salvation. And like I said before, there's a lot of people that fall into this category.

And they become frustrated saying, well, I made a commitment back there, but did you accept Him in your heart? Or was He just working on the outside and trying to get in? Yes, there comes a peace. You know, if He's working on the outside trying to come into our heart, yes, there is a peace when we confess some sin. It relieves the burden, but there's still a burden there.

And too many times, too many people that are counseling or whatever are giving a false assurance and saying, well, sure, you're a Christian. You raise your hand. At a revival meeting, we'll pray for you and you just go on your way.

You're a Christian now. But has the sin been dealt with is the question that I'm challenging each one of our hearts. Has your sin been dealt with? Has your sin been taken care of? Remember, the Holy Spirit or Jesus Christ dwells in the heart.

And I'm not saying that we will not sin, but we will have the power to be victorious over sin. That's a big difference between that and yielding to it. What does it mean to be born again? It means to have a clean heart, all sin confessed, be regenerated.

You were putting your output before was of the things of the world, but now your output is after the things of the Lord. You have made a 180 degree turn and are headed the opposite direction. Has there been a change in your life? If I were to ask you or if Jesus Christ were standing here this morning and saying, are you converted? Are you born again? And you say, well, I'm not sure.

Well, have you changed? Are your desires different? If you need the things of the world to keep you happy, you're of the world. But if you need the things of Jesus Christ and you enjoy the fellowship of the believers, fellowship of His people, then you're a child of His. So, are you born again? Do you have the

assurance of salvation? And you can.

You don't have to be struggling there and saying, well, I'm not sure if I am or I'm not sure where I am and all that. My encouragement is find someone to counsel with you. Get on your knees.

And remember, you first of all have to renounce and confess before Jesus Christ can come into your heart. May God have His blessing. Say amen to that message.

Ezekiel would say it this way. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put My spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and you shall keep My judgments and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers and you shall be My people and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleanness.

Is that your testimony this morning? That was Ezekiel and that is 36 verse 24 through 29. I've been praying that the Lord would bring us revival, that He would speak to our hearts and I thank God for the message that He has laid upon Brother John Michael's heart this morning and I think we'll continue with the service at this time.

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