

New Birth Creates New Life

1 John 5:1-5

August 3 & 4, 2013
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It is great to be back in the pulpit here at Bethel after a few weeks of hearing exceptional messages from exceptional teachers. I'd like to thank Jeff, Tony, Brad, and Mike for their ministry of the Word to us.

Besides working on projects for a few weeks, I was also blessed again this year to speak at Woodlands Camp in north Georgia. It was especially great to have Jennifer and Kiralee along with me and to show them a wonderful ministry that has been part of my story for the past 13 years.

Speaking of Jennifer and Kiralee, here's an update. We have passed the 8-week mark with our daughter and she continues to grow and change. We are already sad about this as we like her just as she is. One change we are thrilled with is a little more sleep. We've been in that survival mode that all parents of infants understand. It's great and it's exhausting. It's the sleep equivalent of college finals week, only it goes on and on. So if it seems that we've been off the grid a little it's because we have been on the baby grid. We are so thankful for how our church family has shown kindness to us in so many ways. Thank you.

We are in the home stretch of our study of 1 John. We start the final chapter, chapter 5, today. John continues to do what he set out to do—emphasize to a church of distraught Christians how they can know they have eternal life.

Here's an observation. One of the best indicators of being saved is a strong interest in whether I am or not. In some cases, doubt and wonderings are a great sign of the Spirit. I am much less concerned for the person who is introspective about their standing before God and much more concerned for the person who thinks very little about it. They go to church. They go home. They set about their hobbies and interests. They spend little time or energy on their standing before God. Why should they? They went to church after all. They had some past spiritual experience. *"I must be good with God and eternal life is mine and don't trouble me with any details."*

Why won't you spend dedicated time assessing your true spiritual condition? Why do you assume so much? Why do you risk so much? Over the course of this series on genuine evidences of salvation, I have had moments of such dismay as I have seen people very convinced of their salvation showing such disregard for the need to love or the need to obey. I've wondered at times, are you listening to John? It seems beyond their comprehension that the reason their life is heading the direction it is may be that they are not genuinely saved. In these final weeks on this subject, I feel urgency as the text allows me to speak to the convinced who think they are saved but are not.

To get you truly saved, I need John to convince you that you are not. Maybe then you will become so. John continues to pound his point. Our text today is 1 John 5:1-5.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For

everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:1-5 ESV)

We see John working these same evidences: right belief, right living, right loving. It is critical that we keep in mind the difference between salvation as new birth and salvation as new life.

New Birth and New Life

One is the cause, one is the effect. One is the root, one is the fruit. One creates life and the other evidences it. John writes about the evidences of genuine salvation (new life) and calls the beginning of new life being “born of God.” He does that throughout this section (emphasis mine).

- *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. (Verse 1)*
- *Everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. (Verse 1)*
- *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. (Verse 4)*

He had done it throughout the letter:

- *No one born of God makes a practice of sinning (1 John 3:9)*
- *Whoever loves has been born of God and knows God (1 John 4:7)*

It is the basis for how he uses “children of God.”

- *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God. (1 John 3:1)*

It’s a very effective word picture. Birth. Everyone has been born at least once. Let’s just see if that is true. Is there anyone out there who has never been born? We’ve all been born once. The question for salvation is if we’ve been born twice. The first is physical birth. The second is spiritual birth. So necessary is the second birth that Jesus said in John 3:3, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (John 3:3)

Why? The easy answer is sin and death. The bigger answer is that when God created mankind, he put in us a spiritual nature whose express purpose was to commune, fellowship, worship, enjoy, and delight in and with God our creator. When Adam and Eve sinned, their spiritual life died and along with them, so did ours. They could create physical life which they did in Cain, Abel, and Seth, and the 7 billion people on planet earth currently. But instead of passing on a living spiritual nature, all their descendants are born spiritually dead.

New birth or what John calls here being “born of God,” is a description of what God does by the Holy Spirit—to take a spiritually dead person and make them spiritually alive. Essentially, it is a kind of resurrection—a revolution—which transforms the spiritual deadness inside and makes it spiritually alive. It makes it new. A new spiritual life. A new birth. A new creation. A new heart. A new man and woman spiritually alive within. A life that will never end. This is eternal life.

He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5) This is genuine and authentic salvation; the re-creation of Adam and Eve’s pre-Fall experience of

spiritual fullness and joy and delight in God and he in us. It is possible because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. New birth creates an entirely new set of desires and affections within. It is supernatural. It is a work of God. How does it come to me personally? What is the means humanly that I experience this utter and complete transformation?

Faith. *And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.* (1 John 5:4) Faith is the midwife who births this new life in us. We are saved by faith not meaning that our faith saves us, but that faith is the conduit between the grace of God and my personal appropriation of it. I believe saving faith is also a gift from God so that I can and will believe. But the sinner is unaware that God is gifting the faith; he simply knows that he is trusting in Jesus completely for his salvation.

Here is the link...

New Birth Creates New Life

New spiritual life within. All John has done in this letter is to point out what it looks like to be spiritually alive. He does it again in this passage.

- Believes that Jesus is the Christ (Verse 1)
- Believes that Jesus is the Son of God (Verse 5)
- Loves God the Father (Verse 1)
- Loves fellow Christians (Verse 2)
- Obeys God's commandments (Verses 2-3)
- Overcomes the world (Verses 4-5)

Notice the themes: a right belief, a right love, and a right life.

How do you know who is spiritually alive? I feel like the answer to this question has been completely missed in many Christian circles in which the answer to that question is a story or an experience you can point to. Praise God for genuine moments of salvation and renewal. My years at Woodlands Camp and here at Bethel have convinced me of how God can work decisively in a moment that forever changes the course of someone's life.

However, those experiences prove their genuineness over time. New birth creates new life. This new life shows itself in categories where the change is to some degree evident. One of John's categories is obedience to the will and Word of God. Is the general course of my life in the direction of the will of God? As we previously discussed, "obedience is a long walk in the same direction." If I were to walk from here to Ohio, I may take a few wrong turns, but my general direction would be east. If I say I am walking to Ohio but I resolutely ignore the map and find myself in Iowa, I can say I am an east walker but my walk shows that I am a west walker.

We heard these kinds of testimonies at our lake baptism last weekend. "I was this way, my life was going this painful and sinful direction, but now after Jesus my life is going a whole new direction." How did that happen? New birth creates new life—new affections and directions toward the will of God.

All the evidences of real salvation have to do with ongoing indications of spiritual life. That's what's wrong with the assurance approach that simply asks, "Did you start hiking toward Ohio? Have you ever come to the point in your life where you believed you were a hiker? Did you ever claim to be a hiker? As long as you claim to be a hiker then you must be a hiker. Were you ever a member of a hiker club and did you ever give money to the club?"

There you go; you are most certainly a hiker!" John says that it's not your claim to be a hiker that makes you a hiker, but it's actually hiking the right direction, believing the core hiking doctrines, and loving your fellow hikers that makes you a hiker.

What do we say to the person who insists they are a hiker and they have followed the directions to Ohio but they are spiritually standing in Iowa? They are falsely assured of their salvation. What is the eternal consequence for the person who thinks they are a Christian but finds out in eternity they are not? Hell is a never-ending wake-up call that new birth creates new life.

New Life Conquers/Overcomes the World

There is a wonderful verse tucked in here. Verse 4, *And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith*. It's that wonderful Greek word *nike*, like the shoe company. Victory! Win! Conquer! Literally it says, *This is the nike that has niked the world*.

Don't think of "world" like Alexander the Great did. We are not conquering a geographical world. We are overcoming "the world" as an entire value set and life purpose that is against God. It is humanity in subconscious rebellion against God. Verse 19 of this chapter says, *The whole world lies in the power of the evil one*. The world is humanity seeking meaning apart from God. It is mankind in all its despairing and lonely selfishness. It is this world that our faith overcomes because our faith is the means to this new life in Christ.

We conquer the world in the sense that we overcome the world's emptiness of life, worship of self, idolatry of material things, terror of death, and hopeless despair. Faith is the means to the new birth that creates the new life. This new life is the opposite of the world and it overcomes it.

So in that way we may say that faith is the victory as long as we understand that faith is the means to a victory that Jesus has accomplished for us and which the Father includes us in for his glory and our eternal good.

Am I Evidencing Signs of Genuine Spiritual Life?

John doesn't write this and the Holy Spirit didn't include it in Scripture for us to simply read. It is here so that we ask the right questions over our soul.

From this text:

- Do I believe that Jesus is the Christ? Do I believe that Jesus is the Son of God? (Verses 1 & 5)
- Are there real indications of sacrificial love for my fellow Christian? (Verse 2)
- Am I faithfully prioritizing God's will in the moral decisions of my life? (Verse 3)
- Is the world shaping and controlling my life? Am I seeing real victories in areas the world, the flesh, and the devil want to control in me? (Verse 4)

By asking these kinds of questions, I am watching for signs of spiritual life and health which reassure me that I am spiritually alive.

All this talk about birth and being born and life are a temptation to illustrate from my new experience as a parent, which is beyond my ability to ignore. So I am succumbing to this temptation to use Kiralee as an illustration. In case you are new here, I became a parent for

the first time eight weeks ago at the ripe age of 45. That's a long time of waiting. My wife Jennifer and I are definitely on the dotting side of the parenting spectrum.

Before Kiralee was born, we put the nursery together. We carefully researched what to buy—strollers and car seats and all the other stuff. We wanted the best we could get for her. One of the things we were careful to think through was how we would keep an eye on her, especially at night. If you haven't parented in the last few decades, there is a whole industry of products that are for parental electronic surveillance. So we set up her nursery for maximum electronic surveillance.

We have an Angelcare Baby Monitor. It is pretty slick. You place it under the mattress of the baby. It senses movement through the mattress. Kicks and gyrations are easy but this thing senses even breathing. If there is no movement for more than 10 seconds, it sounds the alarm. We have the remote in our bedroom. If there is no movement, the fear is there is no life. Sound the alarm.

We also have a Motorola Video Baby Monitor. This is really sweet. You mount the camera above the crib and it looks down on her. It also does audio monitoring. Any sound in the room is transmitted to the remote. It's like sitting in the room. It also transmits video in full color. It can zoom. It can pan side to side. At night is when it gets really cool. It has infrared night vision so that even in the dark, we have full video eyes on her. We can push a button and talk to her. At the push of a button we can play music. It tells us the room temperature. This thing does everything but change her diaper.

So at any moment, day or night that she is there, we are monitoring her status. We have audio monitoring. We have video monitoring. We have temperature monitoring. We have infrared Seal Team 6 night vision monitoring. We have movement monitoring. We are monitoring this girl above and below and all around.

What are we monitoring? What are we constantly watching for? Life! We are looking for life! Signs of life! Sound. Movement. Breathing. And the moment there is an absence of any of them, alarms go off and we come running.

What is 1 John imploring us to look for? Life! He's showing us how to look for signs of life; how to know we are spiritually alive. Is there spiritual movement in your life through obedience and love? Are you spiritually breathing? Are you making spiritual noises of faith?

If there is no movement, if there is no breathing, if there is no noise, there is no life.

So the question comes to you. Look at your life. What do you see? What do you hear? As I see genuine signs of spiritual life, it is reassuring. If there are none, what should I do? Repent and believe and see how new birth will create in you new life.

This week one night, the alarm went off at 2:30 in the morning. It was the first time, so I jumped and went flying into the room. There she was, wiggling and making sounds. There is nothing more reassuring then seeing the unmistakable signs of life. Birth creates life. Spiritually, new birth creates and sustains new life in Christ.

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