

"Born of God"
(John 1:11-13)

Introduction: It is very much in vogue today, because of the prevalent Arminian influence in the church, to believe that salvation is nothing more than a decision to follow Christ. Many believe that man has the power in his own hands to choose Christ. That is, they have the power to receive Christ and to apply all of His benefits to themselves without any help from God. They carry around in their own pockets the key to life, which will open the door of salvation at any time they please. This belief has led many to put off the infinitely important matter of their own salvation until the end of their lives. After they have had their fill of the world, and the world's pleasures, and they can enjoy them no more because of age, they seek to escape the consequences of their evil actions by turning to Christ on their death beds. But by far a majority of them are sorely disappointed when they leave this life to find that the pit of hell has opened up under them only to swallow them up in everlasting misery, with only a moment's respite when they are called to stand before God to be judged for their deeds, before they are cast eternally into the lake of fire.

There are others in the church who think that not all men have this ability to choose life, but those who are born in the church. All men do not have this key, but surely the children of the covenant do. And so the parents of these children do not seek after their salvation as they ought to. They teach their children that an outward conformity to the righteousness of the Law is enough. They do this by teaching them that if they do not become covenant breakers, then surely they are saved. The result is that many live their whole lives within the bounds of the church, but still end up being swallowed up into hell when they die.

There are still others who believe that the Christian life is simply believing the facts about Jesus. They believe that He is who He said He was, and that He did what He said He did. They think that simply because they have believed these things and have prayed a simple prayer, that Christ will own them on the day of Judgment. And so they go to church, and they seek to live an outwardly moral life. But they never give to Christ what He really requires of them, namely, their whole heart and mind and soul and strength. They live for themselves and flatter themselves that they are Christ's and that they are sure of salvation. They think that the grace of Christ will cover their sloth and licentiousness, but they as well will slide down into the pit to await their judgment on the final day of Christ's coming.

But none of these views are correct. Salvation is not in the power of any man, but of God alone. Christianity is not a decision that one makes, so that one day he decides to live for Christ. Salvation is not something which is passed down in families. It is true that covenant children have a much greater advantage than non-covenant children, but it is also true that they will receive greater punishment unless they turn from all their sins and embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior. Christianity is also not something that can be trifled with. It is more than weekly church services, listening to the Word of God but not doing, and the lifting of praise without the heart fully engaged. It is the giving up of all that you are and all that you ever will be to do the will of Christ. It is the giving of your life to love and serve Him with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength, at all times and in every place. It is high time that the church realizes what Christianity is so that she can begin to do what her Lord has called her to do. This morning, what I want you to see is that,

The New Birth comes only from the sovereign good pleasure of God. & it produces a radical change of life.

- I. First, Notice that John Tells Us that Although Christ Is Offered to Many, Only a Few Will Receive Him.
 - A. He Tells Us that Jesus Came to His Own People, but They Did Not Receive Him.
 1. He came, as the language tells us literally, to His own things.
 - a. They were His creatures. He had made them. Therefore, He owned them outright.
 - b. But these were more particularly His own, because they were in covenant with Him. They bore the covenant sign of circumcision in their flesh. They were the Old Covenant people of God.
 2. But these did not receive Him.
 - a. He had every reason to expect them to, after all they had the oracles of God, the Old Testament Scriptures.
 - b. In those Scriptures, the coming of Messiah had been prophesied as early as the Fall of Adam and Eve.
 - c. They did not know exactly when the Messiah would come, but they did know much about where He would come and what He would do. Jesus was constantly pointing them to the Scriptures to show them that they were pointing to Him.
 - d. He even came to the teachers of Israel, those who should have recognized Him more easily than the others, but they were His most outspoken opponents.
 - e. And many of them didn't even understand the Scripture. Jesus said to Nicodemas, "ARE YOU THE TEACHER OF ISRAEL, AND DO NOT UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS?" (John 3:10).
 - f. Even though they belonged to Him and should have given Him the honor and willing obedience which was His due, yet they would not. They rejected Him.
 - g. You see, there are many who profess to be children of the church who are yet dead to the things of the Lord.
 - B. However, There Were Those Who Did Receive Him.
 1. There is always a remnant in God's gracious plan.
 - a. The prophet Isaiah said, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE AS THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED" (Rom. 9:27).
 - b. The Lord has His elect in every age. Out of the many, there are always a few.
 - c. At the time of Elijah, out of the hundreds of thousands in Israel, there were only seven thousand who did not bow their knees to Baal (Rom. 11:4). The rest of them perished, even as the multitude perished who came out of Egypt, who were not able to enter the promised land because they had no true faith, *except for Caleb & Joshua who did believe.*
 - d. And yet these relatively few people in each age add up in the end to a multitude which no man can number, who will thronge the throne of God and worship Him forever (Rev. 7:9).
 2. That remnant in Christ's day, those elect of God, did receive Him.
 - a. They believed on His name. They received Him by faith.
 - b. Believing on the name of Christ is the same as trusting and relying upon Him personally to save them from their sins.
 - c. It is to receive Him as a gift from God.
 - d. It is to receive His teachings as good and true.
 - e. It is to receive His laws as just and holy.
 - f. It is to die to yourself and to live for Christ. *to receive His life*

3. And those who received Him were given the right to become the children of God.
 - a. This is the blessing of adoption into the family of God. God adopts those who flee to Christ for refuge.
 - b. It is not just anyone that God takes for His own. He cannot allow any sin to dwell in His presence. He cannot endure the wickedness of man before Him.
 - c. It is only the righteous, the pure, the clean that the Lord takes into His household and calls His sons and daughters.
 - d. And it is only those who receive Christ and believe on His name that receive cleansing from all their sins and the robe of pure white linen, the clothing of a perfect righteousness.
 - e. And so, although the Gospel is offered to many, yet only a few will comply with its demands of faith in Christ and repentance from all sin. And only those who do will enter into the number of the children of God.

II. Secondly, John Tells Us that The Reason that Any Receive Him Is Not Due to Anything in Them, But Solely to the Power of God.

A. He Says that They Were Not Born of Blood, Nor of the Will of the Flesh.

1. That is, they were not born to it by natural birth.
 - a. Those who are the heirs in this world to worldly treasures are usually born to it. They are born into the right families. If you are born the only son of a rich man, and he is disposed to favor you with his fortune, he will bequeath it to you in his will.
 - b. But those who fall heir to this heavenly fortune do not come by it through that kind of birth.
2. Likewise, your birth into a covenant household will not reserve you a place in heaven.
 - a. Being born in a covenant household may offer to you many blessings. It does give you access to the means of grace. And if your parents are conscientious and consistent in their use of those means on your behalf, it will certainly give to you a great advantage.
 - b. But that is not enough. Ham was born into a covenant household, and yet he was cursed of his father (Gen. 9:24-25). Ishmael was born into the family of Abraham, and yet he was not converted (Gal. 4:30). Esau was a son of Isaac, even as Jacob was, and yet he was rejected by God (Heb. 12:16).
 - c. The new birth does not come through family lineage. *Paul writes, "But not the children of the flesh are children of God, but the children of the promise"*

B. Secondly, He Says that Their Receiving of Christ Is Not Due to Their Own Power of Choice, "NOR OF THE WILL OF MAN."

1. Man in his natural state is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:7).
 - a. He comes into the world as a sinner, completely adverse to the things of God. Paul says, "THERE IS NO ONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD" (Rom. 3:11). "THOSE WHO ARE IN THE FLESH CANNOT PLEASE GOD" (Rom. 8:8).
 - b. Because of this corruption of his nature, he will not come to Christ that he might receive His life. Jesus said, "AND THIS IS THE JUDGMENT, THAT THE LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD, AND MEN LOVED THE DARKNESS RATHER THAN THE LIGHT; FOR THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL. FOR EVERYONE WHO DOES EVIL HATES THE LIGHT, AND DOES NOT COME TO THE LIGHT, LEST HIS DEEDS SHOULD BE EXPOSED" (John 3:19-20).

2. Even his concern to avoid the wrath of God is not enough to bring him to Christ.
 - a. There is within every man the desire to avoid pain. No one wants to suffer in hell for eternity.
 - b. But even this desire is not enough to create within his heart the desire for Christ. Christ is holy; God is holy; His Word and His requirements are holy. An unholy man cannot and will not desire these things. He will never embrace them.
 - c. And that is why, when men believe that it is in their own power to choose Christ any time they wish, they put it off indefinitely. They really do not want Him. Holiness is not attractive to them, sin is. And they do not have the power to change their hearts.
 - d. That is why Paul writes, "SO THEN IT DOES NOT DEPEND ON THE MAN WHO WILLS OR THE MAN WHO RUNS" (Rom. 9:16).

C. Rather, It Depends "ON GOD WHO HAS MERCY." And That Is What John Is Telling Us This Morning. "THEY WERE BORN NOT OF BLOOD, NOR OF THE WILL OF THE FLESH, NOR OF THE WILL OF MAN, BUT OF GOD."

1. They did not have the ability to believe on Christ in their natural state apart from the grace of God. *They were not born of God. When they believed, then they were born of God and then they*
2. But once God quickened their hearts to life, once the Spirit of God breathed into their nostrils the breath of spiritual life, they became new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). *ability to believe.*
 - a. This is called regeneration, or the new birth.
 - b. Their hearts were made new. They had a new inclination in life, an inclination toward holiness. And once that was present in their hearts, they began to seek Christ and the things above where Christ is.
3. God must do this. Man cannot.
 - a. He cannot cause himself to be born again. It is not within his power to do. It is not within your power to do.
 - b. The Lord says through Jeremiah the prophet, "CAN THE ETHIOPIAN CHANGE HIS SKIN OR THE LEOPARD HIS SPOTS? THEN YOU ALSO CAN DO GOOD WHO ARE ACCUSTOMED TO DO EVIL" (13:23).
 - c. If you are to be born again, you must come to God. You must throw yourself on His mercy and not stop seeking Him until He has changed your heart, and made you a new creature in Christ.
 - d. But how can you know whether or not He has changed your heart?

III. The Bible Says that Those Who Are Born of God Are Easily Distinguished from the World by a Radically Changed Nature.

A. John Bunyon Offers the Following Changes as Evidence of the New Birth Which Are Analogous to Natural Birth.

1. He says, "A child, before it be born into the world, is in the dark dungeon of its mother's womb: so a child of God, before he be born again, is in the dark dungeon of sin, sees nothing of the kingdom of God; therefore it is called a new birth: the same soul has love one way in its carnal condition, another way when it is born again."
2. "As it is compared to a birth, resembling a child in his mother's womb, so it is compared to a man being raised out of the grave; and to be born again, is to be raised out of the grave of sin; 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' To be raised from the grave of sin is to be begotten and born." (Book 1.)
3. The consequences of this new birth might also be compared to the characteristics of a new born child.

- a. A child, when it is first born, cries.
- (i) If it does not make any noise at all, then it is dead.
 - (ii) So it is with those who are born of God. If this new life of God is within your soul, you will cry out to Him. You will say with the Philippian jailer, "WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?" (Acts 16:30).
 - (iii) You will cry out to Christ and ask Him to save you. You will seek to lay hold of Him by faith, and you will never let up until you enter heaven's gates.
 - (iv) If this zeal is not in you, then you are yet still born.
- b. A child, when it is first born, craves after food.
- (i) It cannot live without its mother's milk.
 - (ii) The same is true of the Christian. Peter says, "LIKE NEWBORN BABES, LONG FOR THE PURE MILK OF THE WORD, THAT BY IT YOU MAY GROW IN RESPECT TO SALVATION" (1 Peter 2:2).
 - (iii) If you are born again, there will be a hunger in your soul for the Word. You will want to know it. You will want to know everything that God commands you so that you can do it. You will want to know everything that He forbids so that you can avoid it. And in every place where you have offended Him and others, you will seek biblical reconciliation.
 - (iv) But if you do not have a craving for His food, then you are yet dead in your trespasses and sins.
- c. A child, when it is born, needs to be clothed and cared for.
- (i) It must keep close to its mother, or it will die.
 - (ii) And so it is with the Christian. He seeks after the garments of Christ's righteousness to warm and comfort his heart.
 - (iii) He seeks after the promised Holy Spirit to uphold and sustain the grace which the Father has placed in his heart.
 - (iv) If you are born again, then you will every moment of your life depend on Christ and His provision to save you and to keep you safe within His bosom.
 - (v) But if you live without this constant dependence on Christ, (if you depend only upon yourself,) then you are yet lost.
- d. There are usually similarities between the father and his child.
- (i) Children often have characteristics from one or both of their parents. They look like them, and they act like them.
 - (ii) So it is with those who are born of God. They have changed hearts which now reflect the holiness of their Father. It makes them look and behave differently than the world. It sets them apart.
 - (iii) If you are born from above, then you have the image of God being formed in you. You are becoming every day more like your Father, in all knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).
 - (iv) But if you bear the image of the earthy, you are still of the earth, and in need of the new birth.

- e. Lastly, children are disciplined by their parents to correct their disobedience.
 - (i) When they do that which is harmful to them, or that which is forbidden to them, their parents patiently correct them.
 - (ii) And likewise, the Father disciplines His children when they go astray that they might share in His holiness, "FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES" (Heb. 12:6).
 - (iii) If you are born again, you also share in His discipline. "BUT IF YOU ARE WITHOUT DISCIPLINE, OF WHICH ALL HAVE BECOME PARTAKERS, THEN YOU ARE ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN AND NOT SONS" (v. 8).
- B. And So I Would Ask You This Morning, Have You Undergone This Radical Change? Are You Born Again from Above?
1. Examine yourselves to see what it is that you are trusting in.
 - a. Are you trusting in your own ability to turn to the Lord whenever you please?
 - b. Are you trusting in the fact that you are a covenant child and that the promises are yours if you do not become an outward covenant breaker?
 - c. Are you trusting in a bare profession of faith: You believe the facts, you go to church, you try and keep some of the commandments, and turn from some sins?
 - d. None of these is enough for a sure foundation of assurance.
 2. Make a careful search of your heart to see if the marks of His grace are there.
 - a. Are you crying out to God daily in renewed faith and repentance in the Son of God? Are you zealously seeking Him?
 - b. Are you hungering and thirsting after the righteousness which He tells you of in His Word? Are you seeking to know and do all of His commands? And are you seeking to know and to avoid all sin?
 - c. Are you showing your humble reliance on Christ by coming to Him daily asking Him for His provision of His Holy Spirit?
 - d. Is your life becoming more and more conformed to His image? Are you reflecting the holiness of Christ?
 - e. And when you turn astray and go off of the path of righteousness, does God chasten you, and does that chastening produce greater godliness in your life?
 3. If these marks are not present in your life, then you need to turn to the Savior today.
 - a. You need to seek after God to change your heart and make you willing to come to Him.
 - b. You cannot change your own heart. You cannot make yourself hate what you love, nor love what you hate. Only God can.
 - c. Seek Him in prayer; seek Him in the Word; seek Him in the public worship service. Ask Him to make you a new creature in Christ.
 4. But if you are a new creature in Christ here this morning, then give the credit where the credit is due.
 - a. You did not receive the ability to embrace Christ from your parents.
 - b. It is not something that you had the inherent ability to do.

- c. *You received that ability through the sovereign act of God. It is to Him that you owe your life and your existence. It is to Him that you owe your safety throughout the rest of time.*
- d. *Give Him the praise therefore. Give Him the worship that is His due. Serve Him with all of your heart, pressing forward into His kingdom with all of your might until you finally reach the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. That is the only sacrifice of spiritual worship which is worthy of His indescribable gift of His Son. Amen.*