

The plain truth is, that "sincerity and earnestness" are becoming the idol of many Christians in these latter days. People seem to think it matters little what opinions a man holds in religion, so long as he is "earnest and sincere", and you are thought uncharitable if you doubt his soundness in the faith! Against this idolatry of mere "earnestness" I enter my solemn protest. I charge every reader to remember that God's written Word is the only rule of faith, and to believe nothing to be true and soul-saving in religion which cannot be proved by plain texts of Scripture. I entreat him to read the Bible and make it his only test of truth and error, right and wrong.

~ J.C. Ryle

BENJAMIN KEACH'S CATECHISM

(Presented here as originally published – this does not constitute a full endorsement of the Riverside Baptist Church)

Q. 33. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us, by His Holy Spirit. (John 3:5,6; Titus 3:5,6)

Q. 34. How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?

A. The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling. (Eph. 2:8; 3:17)

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Sunday Morning Bible Study -- 10:00 AM

Sunday Morning Worship -- 11:00 AM

Prayer and Bible Study Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

WCWV 92.9 FM – 8:00 AM Sunday Morning

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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BEING BORN AGAIN

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

The doctrine of the New Birth is one of the most perverted of all biblical truths. Of course, it would be the intention of the forces of evil to attack any truth. In this the very nature of what it means to be saved is either denied or questioned. The very thought of input from one “dead in trespasses and sins” should be enough to cause any to question, but many insist on some innate ability in man to summon up a response to God and to make an intelligent decision regarding it. If that ability exists in fallen man, is there really the need of the new birth in the terms the Bible describes it?

Christ gave us to understand that the New Birth is in no way dependent on the one being born. The question might be raised as to why preach it. I am often reminded of the fact that George Whitfield preached often on the New Birth and was asked by some, as to why he preached so often “Ye must be born again.” His response was, “because You must be born again.” It appears that many avoid preaching what they cannot explain. Yet, the key was given in our Lord’s own words: *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. John 3:8.* He was telling Nicodemus that he could not understand what the Spirit was doing, but he could see the effects.

This text does not suggest the means or a method for being born again. Men have asserted that the “New Birth” can be attained

through the efforts of men and therefore they have devised ways to cause it to happen. Christ made it clear in His words to Nicodemus that it was a sovereign, independent work of the Holy Spirit and that it could not be understood by any under normal circumstances.

This clause comes at the end of a long sentence in which Peter set forth the knowledge possessed by those who are born again. It is of the utmost importance that we know what it means to be born again. Even though the process cannot be understood, the effect is a matter of biblical revelation. Therefore, Peter does not address the issue of how to be born again. He rather presses upon us the realization of what it is to be born again. So, he uses the thought of “being born again.” One may say, “I have been born again,” and project many images in the mind of his hearers. Does he mean “I have made a profession?” Or, does he refer to the form of religion that is derisively called “born again?” If, however, one says “I am born again,” he is describing the very life the Lord gives and it is the very existence of “born again” believers in Christ.

Peter describes in the preceding text certain essential things known by believers. They know of redemption and they know of its price. There is a consciousness of having been rescued from a life of sin and the eternal damnation that follows. In this way they are freed from doubt as to the success of the work, and any presumption about how God saves. They are, furthermore,

aware of the awful price that was paid for redemption. It required no less than the precious blood of Christ as the Lamb of God. It is also known that Christ was foreordained to this task. The scriptures are emphatic in declaring that man never has and never could merit this great salvation that we enjoy. The trust of true believer's is anchored in the fact that God raised Him from the dead. Many trust their opinions and such thoughts as they believe will please God while born again believers look to the victorious resurrection of our Lord. Romans 10:9 *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* Their confidence is that the life He claimed from the dead is imparted to them in the new birth. The life that follows is essential. Peter writes of obedience to the truth that comes through the Holy Spirit. This obedience is not of mere rules and regulations but is rather expressed in the love of the brethren as to those who are identified with us in the love of Christ.

So, Peter directs that they love with a pure heart fervently. The words of our text seem to say that this will be the case since they are born again. To be born again looks beyond an event and rather describes our very existence. It is not what I have done, or even what I have believed

that makes me saved. It, rather speaks of who I am in Christ Jesus my Lord. The Bible uses terms like "made a new creature," or "raised to walk in the newness of life." Believers experience daily a refreshing of hope. This hope is "Christ in us," and that is the result of being born again. Jeremiah declared: Lamentations 3:22-23 *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

Finally, Peter gives us the basis of true assurance in declaring that this New Birth is of "incorruptible seed." The simple meaning here is that we are born of God, not some human invention. And furthermore, we are told that it is by the "Word of God" which cannot be changed. It lives and abides forever even as Christ lives and abides forever in those who are truly "born again."

The preaching of the New Birth is good News to all who hear it in that there can be no doubt as to perfection in the process. When the Gospel is believed, (our Lord preached "repent ye and believe the Gospel") the reason will be that such a person has been born again and his life will prove it. *bhs*

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What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? Romans 6:15-16

Freedom from sin does not mean freedom to sin.

From Paul's day until now, the gospel of grace has been accused of providing license to sin. If salvation is the gift of God's grace, legalists argue, wholly apart from human works, what will motivate people to lead holy lives? In the face of such opposition, Paul never gave an inch on the vital issue of salvation by grace-and neither can we. The Bible teaches a salvation that is entirely by God's free grace through faith and in which human works play no part. But there is a second way in which the doctrine of salvation by grace may be perverted. Fulfilling the legalists' fears, some believe that since God's

grace covers all their sins, they can live as they choose. In today's passage Paul addresses that error.

The very thought of a Christian living in persistent, habitual sin horrified Paul. To the hypothetical question "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" Paul responded emphatically, "May it never be!" As in verse 2, the apostle used the strongest form of negation in the Greek language. In our English vernacular, Paul was saying "Ridiculous! Impossible! No way!" He went on to point out the self-evident truth that no one can serve two masters. Everyone is either a servant of sin or a servant of God; there is no third option. And the one to whom people habitually yield their obedience is their real master, no matter what they may claim.

Don't be deceived by those who claim that since Christians are forgiven, they can therefore sin at will. Such people know nothing of God's grace, which, far from giving us license to sin, "instruct[s] us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:12). John MacArthur

"Praying forces us to articulate our doctrines, convictions, and theological assumptions. These aspects of our Christian life come to a unique focus in prayer because when we speak to God we are explicitly revealing who we believe he is, who we believe we are, what his disposition toward us is, and why he has that disposition." – Albert Mohler

"In short, prayer discloses much about us. It discloses our assumptions and convictions. It discloses our view of God and of ourselves. It discloses our priorities and our assumptions about God's priorities. It discloses our doctrines of God, man, sin, redemption, the world, and a host of other theological matters. If we really want to know what a person believes, we should listen to them pray." – Albert Mohler

"Holiness, like prayer (which is indeed part of it), is something that, though Christians have an instinct for it through their new birth, as we shall see, they have to learn in and through experience. As Jesus "learned obedience from what he suffered" (Heb. 5:8)—learned what obedience requires, costs and involves through the experience of actually doing His Father's will up to and in His passion—so Christians must, and do, learn prayer from their struggles to pray and holiness from their battles for purity of heart and righteousness of life." – J. I. Packer

"We must be clear in our minds that whatever further reasons there may be why God exposes us to the joys and sorrows, fulfillments and frustrations, delights and disappointments, happinesses and hurts, that make up the emotional reality of our lives, all these experiences are part of His curriculum for us in the school of holiness, which is His spiritual gymnasium for our reshaping and rebuilding in the moral likeness of Jesus Christ." – J. I. Packer