The Spirit Renews

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Date: 28 September 2025

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[0:00] Do you have a particular phrase that really gets on your nerves? A lot of people do. I'll confess, the term that really makes me cringe.

! Is it so misleading? Because to refer to a born-again Christian suggests that there's such a thing as a Christian that's not born again.
As though there's some particular type of category of Christian that is born again, but most normal Christians aren't. Jesus is quite clear. He doesn't just call us to believe in God.
To take on a new world view, all those things. When you follow Jesus, something supernatural happens. The Holy Spirit of God comes to dwell, not simply with you, but in you.
The author of the universe takes up residence in your soul.
[1:36] You enter into an altogether different, new spiritual realm.

That gives you a completely different relationship with God. Not somebody that you just believe in, but somebody that you know.
You are given a new identity. You are in Christ Jesus. You're a child of God. As Wesley put it.
I exchanged the faith of a servant for that of a son. It might happen suddenly.
It might happen gradually. Theologian Tom Wright said it's a bit like, imagine waking up. Sometimes you wake up really, really suddenly. The alarm goes on. Bang.
[2:42] One moment you're asleep. One moment you're awake. But sometimes we might wake up much more gradually, much more slowly. To the extent that you're not entirely sure exactly when it was that you stopped being asleep and started being awake.

But the point is, there is such a thing as being asleep and there's such a thing as being awake and there's all the difference between those two states.
God wants us to wake up. God wants us not just to believe something in our heads, but to know him in the depths of our souls. God wants us to be asleep and there's all the rest of our souls.
Be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Not the removal of your mind. The renewal of your mind.
I've got a jar here. Apparently, if you catch a flea... Imagine if you catch a flea and you put it in the jar.
[4:26] it could easily jump I don't know how many times the height of the jar easily right out of it but if you can get it in there and get the lid on in time it will still think it can jump out of it but it won't it doesn't get an escape it gets an awful headache but it will keep on jumping up and down up and down up and down up and down up and down continually banging against that surface that's keeping its in that will continue and I don't know how long exactly it takes but it eventually it realizes it's not a good idea to try and jump out of it because it hurts so instead it will continue to jump but it will jump just a fraction of a distance shy of the surface of the lid now I've never tested this but I'm told that if you do that and then you remove the lid the flea will continue to jump but never out of the jar why because it's become trained and conditioned to accept its limitations now hold that image and reverse it you see when the Holy Spirit renews us it's not like the lid being put on no that that's the life without the Spirit when the Holy Spirit comes upon us and within us and renews us when we are born again when we are transformed by the renewal of the mind it's like that lid is lifted we're free be transformed be transformed says Paul by the renewal of your mind you see the problem is we tend to limit God to the size of our circumstances and we get trapped by that to the size of our circumstances to the size of our circumstances a low view of God is the cause of a thousand lesser evils but a high view of God is the solution to ten thousand problems when the Spirit renews everything changes let's just unpack this in a little bit more detail and think of you know as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 that he talks about you know faith hope and love let's just think about how

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the Spirit renews those three things in us firstly we've got faith everyone has faith again another phrase that I don't like those with of all faiths and none it's nonsense because it suggests that there's somebody walking around somewhere out there who hasn't got any faith nonsense everybody has faith might not realise it it might not be faith in God but it'd be faith in something one of the biggest deceptions is that that somehow you know you don't have faith if you don't believe in God it's nonsense it takes far more faith to be an atheist than it does to become to be a Christian I think in some ways so if it's not God that we believe in if it's not God that we trust in if it's not God that we have faith in you can guarantee that faith will be placed somewhere because it is part of our being as a human to have faith if you think about it life every day requires faith we put our faith in all sorts of things most of the time we're not even aware that we're doing it but we do faith runs right through the fabric of life

right through existence when the Holy Spirit renews it takes that faith which is part of our humanity humanity and transforms it into something that is supernatural transforms it into that faith that is in God to a new state of being it's not often I'll you'll find me quoting Wesley twice in on the same day but I just happened to come across this story this last week and I thought it's worth sharing and apparently he was outside one day and met a man who was really really anxious riddled with fear and apparently Wesley pointed at a cow grazing in the field that was by a wall and the cow just happened to be looking over the wall and apparently John Wesley said to this man you see that cow over there is it trying to look through the wall or is it looking over it he said well it's looking over the top of the wall you can't see through a wall cows can't see through walls we can't see through walls apparently John Wesley said that's what you need to do with your fear stop staring at that wall of fear stop trying to look through it you need to look over it you need that bigger picture look over the wall look over the fear and put your faith in God the Holy Spirit renews our faith into something radically different the Holy Spirit also renews our hope again we put hope in all sorts of things every day of our lives but hope actually enables us real hope enables us to endure in fact it describes in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 endurance inspired by hope years ago there was an experiment in a laboratory where psychologists were trying to explore what hope is how it functions how it operates and they took a group of rats and they put the rats into a tub of water and timed how long it took them to drown then they took a second batch of rats and then they they put them in exactly the same conditions in the water timed them until they were just about to drown again it was almost exactly the same length of time but a few seconds short of their drowning they scooped them out of the water and let them recover put them back in the water did the same thing again waited till they were about to drown and then scooped them out and as they repeated this process each time they saw that the rats could actually survive a little bit longer a little bit longer a little bit longer until it was a long time longer what was the difference between the first group of rats and the second the second discovered hope and so they could endure when the Holy Spirit comes upon us and renews our minds we can endure because we know that hand of salvation is there but Paul talks about faith hope and love again something fundamental
to what it is to be human we love but we love in all sorts of different ways but the Bible tells us that God is love not God has love but God is love but God is love that's what we read in 1 John 4 16 not just that God is the source of love although he is not just that he has love but he is not just that he gives us love but he is but God is love now the danger is and this is something that often we come across is that people will reverse that and say well that love is God God is not to be defined by what we think love is rather if you want to know what love is you find it in God that's what agape love selfless giving love is defined in God himself but in our human experience when we encounter the reality of that unconditional love and it just blows us away that's that glimpse of that eternal God and notice that that Paul says there's faith there's hope and there's love but the greatest of these is love why should it be the greatest well faith and hope will eventually when we encounter God in eternity be required no more in eternity you won't need faith in eternity you won't need to hope because in eternity all there will be is love as we have that eternal presence of God with no more suffering and no more pain no more having to trust no more having to have faith no more need to have hope because God is there and everything will be perfect and it's that renewal that is the most foundational thing that when the Holy Spirit comes upon us he renews us in love you know when we're obnoxious as Christians and boy we can be that's not the Holy Spirit at work in us and that's why it's a lifelong process right through our time yes on earth yes we can be confident that we have been set free we have been saved for all eternity but the Holy Spirit's work for us it never stops it

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keeps needing to work in us to to bring more love into our lives to sweep out all that is not of God all that is not loving and that's what we need over and over and over again my prayer is that's precisely what will happen not just right now but each and every day you know this summer we had a heat wave and you probably noticed that a lot of the grass went very very brown and dry
I remember out walking down by the salt the salt house and fields and looking at that thinking that looks like it's never going to grow back then suddenly it wasn't so dry was it walking down there early morning this week and they were mowing the lawn that was very very green and very long it only takes just a few days of rain and it comes right back again and I hold that as an image before all of us an image of what God longs to do for each of us perhaps it may well be that you've been a follower of Jesus for a long long time and you feel dry God's Holy Spirit is there to renew that love along with that faith and that hope in you maybe you're listening to this maybe you're listening to this online and you're thinking to myself actually actually I'm not sure that I do know what that is to be born again but I so much want that to happen or simply ask God
I'm going to leave in a prayer right now we're going to do just that I'm going to ask the same prayer for each and every one of us that wherever we're at whether we have been renewed recently or whether we sense actually we never have been let's just ask God to do that let's do that now let's pray Lord thank you that your desire is to give us life life that is so much richer and brighter and bigger and fuller and wider and deeper and greater than we've ever experienced and can possibly imagine Lord that's what's in store for us in eternity but right now we can begin to get a taste of it thank you Lord that you came to us in Jesus that you've saved us you've set us free but you don't leave us alone but you pour out your spirit that we might be renewed
[18:04] Lord would you renew our minds would you renew us in our faith in our hope and in our love Lord it may be that perhaps we've never asked you to do that before Lord for those of us right now that have never given our lives to you here's a prayer Lord Jesus thank you that you died for me thank you that you are alive I give my life to you now thank you that I am your child thank you that I may know that I have been saved for all eternity fill me with your

Holy Spirit that I may follow you as your servant Amen and for those of us who have been following Jesus for some time but just long for that sense of refresh and renewal that the brown grass may become lush and green here's a prayer Lord in our lives we can become weary we can become dry but thank you that in your words you tell us not just to be filled but to go on being filled to be renewed Holy Spirit would you renew us now and in the time to come help us tomorrow and the next day and each day help us to be open to your renewal whatever shape that looks like
Holy Spirit come and fill us and renew us in Jesus name Amen Amen

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