

Your Salvation Is An Act of God

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[0 : 00] 3, and we like to remain standing as we hear the Word of God, the sermon text. That's what the people of God did in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, as these sojourners were brought back to worship and the kingdom was prefigured, it was typified for what we now enjoy in Jesus Christ.

So we hear this Word as the Word of our King Jesus. Today's sermon text is John chapter 3, verses 1 through 12. I'm going to read this, and then at the end I will say, this is the Word of God, and we will respond, thanks be to God.

So hear now the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old?

[1 : 19] Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.

The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus said to him, How can these things be? Jesus answered him, You are the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.

If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? This is the Word of God.

[2 : 33] Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Let's pray. Oh Lord, you formed the Spirit of man within him.

You made his life. The Spirit of God made us. And it's the breath of the Almighty that gives life. You put wisdom in the innermost being, and you are the one who gives understanding to the mind of man.

We ask now that once again, by the power of your Holy Spirit, you will breathe spiritual life to all who have an ear to hear. Speak, Lord, that your Word will not return in void.

We pray for the glory of King Jesus and for the coming of his kingdom through his church. Amen. Amen. I have a very simple message for you today.

I believe this is the message Jesus had, and it's this. It's the title of our sermon. Your salvation is an act of God. Your salvation is an act of God.

[3 : 46] In 1987, a weather forecaster in the United Kingdom named Michael Fish, he told viewers in the midday broadcast to ignore talk of a hurricane approaching southern England, saying it would become merely very windy that day.

As you might be able to imagine, those who listened to this man were left speechless by what actually happened. A severe storm felled 15 million trees.

It caused damage surpassing \$2.3 billion. Tragically, 20 people were killed because they were unprepared and then unable to save themselves.

It was too late for them to find a safe shelter by the time the storm hit. Such a hurricane is what insurance companies call acts of God.

They're so massive, so much mightier than human power, so majestically sovereign, and mysteriously unpredictable.

[4 : 58] No one in their right mind would claim credit for a hurricane or a tornado or a tsunami or a typhoon. Those are acts of God, aren't they?

And Jesus says the wind blows where it wishes. No one sees where it's coming or where it's going. Similarly, when a baby is born, the toughest former veteran grandpa, he will just melt into a puddle and he will say, this is a miracle, this little baby.

What a miracle. The fact that a new life can take place and be formed inside the womb of a mommy, and then a tiny new little person comes forth, comes out of there, that's an even mightier act, isn't it?

It's the same God who controls the wind. His providence is over all his creation. That same God breathed life into Adam and Eve, his image bearers, and it's that same God alone who has the power to breathe new life into a dead soul.

So that's what Jesus is telling Nicodemus. Greater than these acts of God in nature, even greater than a physical birth, is the phenomenon that God alone can do to bring forth new life.

[6 : 16] The new birth. And that's the one doctrine that's in focus in these first 12 verses of chapter 3. It's what the church has called new birth, which also can be worded this way, regeneration, regeneration.

So that's our doctrine in view today. Greater than the mightiest storm, greater than the birth of your most precious baby, is God's act in bringing forth spiritual life.

An act of God that takes place inside the person, and it happens mysteriously, like the movement of the wind. Look at verse 5. Jesus tells Nicodemus in verse 5, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot, physically, spiritually cannot, he's incapable of entering the kingdom of God.

So what I pray that you'll be able to hear today is just that. You cannot enter the kingdom of God unless you are born of the Spirit. You cannot enjoy eternal life with God unless you are given new life by God's Holy Spirit.

You are unable to choose salvation from sin by the power of your own will. That's what Jesus preaches, unless you are first regenerated by the Spirit of God, sent from heaven to apply the work of Christ to your soul.

[7 : 52] So about three times, I'm going to say the title of the sermon, and I want you to cry back with as much energy as this gospel is true for you. Your response is simply this, All glory be to God.

Let's practice it one time. I'm going to say the title of the sermon, and you say it back. Ready? Your salvation is an act of God. All glory be to God.

Now be ready. Listen for that title, and you say that every time. Well, I want to show this to you from this passage in two points. The first point is this, Why new birth is necessary.

And the second point is, What is new birth? So what is new birth? Why is it necessary? Is that clear? That's where we're going. Okay. So why new birth is necessary?

I want to give you a couple reasons. Number one, because knowing about God, knowing of God, is not enough. As simple as that sounds, there's no one who knew more about God at this time than Nicodemus.

[8 : 56] And it was not enough. Look at verse one. We're told he was a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews. So Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, a member of the Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrin was made up of about 70 representatives, very, very powerful. And he was also a Pharisee. And the Pharisees were coming from within this religious establishment, but they had a high view of God's word, and they wanted to reform it from within.

They wanted to try to purify the established religion. There were probably about 2,000 Pharisees scattered throughout all of Israel. And only, you know, representative maybe 40 or 50 got to be on the Sanhedrin.

And that's who Nicodemus was among. Steve Lawson, another pastor, said the Sanhedrin, in our mind, it would be like combining the Supreme Court, all the power that they have in this land, with Congress.

That's like how powerful the Sanhedrin would have been. But it was not enough for Nicodemus to be from the Sanhedrin, a ruler of the Jews. And it wasn't enough for him to be a Pharisee, because the Pharisees, they would want to take God's word so highly that they started to add on extra

cautions.

[10:11] So they wanted to put guards around their own life that they would never break God's law. They had a high view of God, high view of his word and his law. And that was not enough to save himself.

It's also not enough to know that a heavenly kingdom exists. Look at verse 3. Nicodemus begins this dialogue at night in the dark, most likely coming to flatter Jesus, to try to establish maybe we can work together here.

I'm representing Sanhedrin. We see that you've got some signs from God. Let's work together. And Jesus does not have a conversation with Nicodemus' words.

Jesus has a conversation with Nicodemus' inner man, with his soul. And let's just pause about that for a moment. When you're praying, you're having a dialogue with God.

And you can turn to the Psalms and let the Psalms help give words to what's in your inner man, your soul, because God knows your heart. And yes, he hears your words, but he's going to speak truth to you, to your soul.

[11:21] So don't think that with our words, we can ever deceive God. He sees, he knows what's in the heart of man. Remember, John's made this point. And Jesus tells him, you cannot see the kingdom of God unless you're born again.

Verse 3. So Nicodemus, at least in the inner man, he knew there is a heavenly kingdom. There is a spiritual realm. And he's trying his best to live that out in his life.

Live my life now in light of a future heaven. And that's not enough to save himself. One biblical scholar, William Hendrickson, said, Pharisees, it means separatists.

And they began to appear about 100 years before Christ. And they were right on many points of doctrine. For example, they did believe that God had a divine decree. He ruled and governed over the entire earth.

They also believed that men and women in our life, we will be morally accountable to God, our creator. The Pharisees believed then that there would be a resurrection of the body.

[12:24] They believed in the existence of spirits, so angels and demons at work in the world. They also believed that God would reward or punish a person based on how they live their life. Some examples of those who grew up out of this movement of the Pharisees were Gamaliel, who disciplined Saul of Tarsus.

He was also a Pharisee. And then later, Josephus, one of the most solid, credible historians of this time period. In Acts 26.5, Paul says, I was according to the strictest party of our religion.

That's who I was from. And I lived as a Pharisee. Paul knew this very well. But the scholar says, these Pharisees made one tragic error in their doctrine.

They externalized religion. And they taught that conformity to the law on the outside, no matter what was going on in the heart, is how you could earn your own salvation.

You can merit your salvation by the principle of works. If you work for it, God will see that and He'll give you eternal life. You see how that's a fatal flaw?

[13:32] And it's not enough to know God's Word and even teach others. Look at verse 10 briefly with Nicodemus in mind. Jesus says, not only are you a ruler of the Jews, you are the teacher of Israel.

So, of all the Sanhedrin, of all the Pharisees, Jesus called Nicodemus number one. You are the teacher of all of Israel. And now He points out how He falls short.

You do not know these things of heaven that I'm talking to you about. It's also not enough to have great esteem in the eyes of man. In the church or in the world, it doesn't matter.

That's what Nicodemus had in addition to wealth and power. He was highly esteemed. He had that reputation. And he still falls short of the glory of God. It's not even enough to say, yeah, I believe historically this man Jesus performed these signs and that God was with him.

Look at verse 2. Nicodemus says that. He says, we know you are a teacher come from God because of your signs. And then verse 2, he says, you wouldn't be able to do these signs unless God was with you.

[14:38] So yeah, you're from, God is with you. He's helping you to do these things. I believe that much about Jesus. And that much about Jesus means spiritual death. So knowing about God is not enough.

Why is the new birth necessary? Number 2, it's necessary because all men from Adam onward are in spiritual darkness.

Nicodemus came to visit Jesus in verse 1, we're told, verse 2, by night. We're in spiritual darkness. Remember, John is, he's a preacher of contrast, but he's also very subtle.

And he's creating this backdrop of darkness surrounding the teacher of the Jews who needed the light from heaven so that he could even see the kingdom of God. All men are in spiritual darkness. Without the new birth, you can't even see God's kingdom, he says. You're so far away from heaven, from the presence of the holy God. It's not even in your sight. It's not even on the radar of what you should be walking toward.

[15 : 46] Under Adam's curse, your will, your very will, your desires are bound and enslaved to sin and to wickedness. Look at verse 6, what Jesus tells Nicodemus in verse 6.

That which is born of flesh is what? It's flesh. He's saying, Nicodemus, you had one birth. You were born of flesh.

That's not enough. You will fall short of the glory of God. The only birth you got came from the bloodline of Adam. You are still under the curse of that first federal representative head who was banished from the holy presence of God.

You're under that curse. You're flesh. How could you ever understand heavenly things unless you are born again, born of heaven? The canons of Dort had to affirm this teaching.

That which is born of flesh is flesh. You are born in sin. It's all over scripture. But our pride, like Nicodemus, our pride can blind us. So this doctrine called total depravity came under attack.

[16 : 58] And representatives from all the churches, different, you know, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, Anglican, they came together in the city of Dort and they came up with these statements, very simple, it's not even that long, just affirming, here's what the Bible teaches.

And here's what they said, and this is one of our confessions at Reformed Heritage Church. It's simply this, you and I got our corruption from the nature of our original parent.

That's Adam. That's what the Bible teaches. You and I were in sin since our conception. Think of Psalm 51. That's what David says. And we were by nature prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage, enslaved to sin.

Think of Romans chapters 1, 2, and 3. So without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, we are neither able nor willing to return to God by our own strength.

We don't even desire to be reformed in our depraved nature. And we are not even willing to dispose ourself to be reformed.

[18 : 09] We have to affirm that from Scripture. Scripture. You cannot choose to have faith in God because you are so blind, you can't even grasp what it is you're supposed to have faith in.

Notice how this is true. Look at verses 9 and 10. After Jesus tells him this truth, Nicodemus says, how can this be? See, he is his own case in point. How can this be?

I don't understand what I'm even supposed to be grasping here. Because he's in that darkness, even though he knew the law and the word of God better than anyone else. He says, you are, Nicodemus is basically saying, I am still my own God and it's my own pride here and that is blinding me.

And if you think that you can save yourself by being a good enough of a person, you're just as blind as Nicodemus until God gives you a new heart and opens your eyes to see that.

No act of man, mere man, can save. It must be the act of God. Your pride will fight against this. You will hate to hear this doctrine.

[19 : 13] You will try to grab every argument you can to fight against it. That's what Nicodemus does. Look at verse 4. He says, he kind of ridicules this whole argument. How can a man who's old get it back into his mom's tummy and be born again when you're old?

He just ridicules this. This is crazy. No one's going to believe that. And that's what our pride wants us to see. The gospel truth is going to seem like foolishness to the flesh. It's going to take an act of God.

So here's our conclusion of why the new birth is necessary from these verses. Before anyone can enter the kingdom of God, he must be made to see the kingdom of God.

And before you can even see the kingdom of God, verse 3, you must be born again from above.

Your eyes must be opened. Hendrickson again concludes, He says, It is clear from the words of Christ Himself, therefore, that there is an act of God which precedes any act of man.

Regeneration comes before conversion and faith. We just sang one of our songs. The verse was, Holy, holy, holy.

[20 : 24] Though the darkness hide thee. What's the next line? Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see.

We just sang that. You must be born again, church. Children, you must be born again. That's what Jesus says.

You must be regenerated. There was a preacher from England named George Whitefield in the mid to late 1700s and he came from England and he was preaching around all the colonies in America and one lady had followed him around.

She'd been to one gathering where he preached the gospel from John 3 and he said, you must be born again. And then she followed him to another gathering and he preached the same verse, you must be born again.

And then it was another Lord's Day and there was no place for him to preach. They had just gone out to an open field, a pasture. A bunch of people came and just sat on the grass and stumps and George Whitefield opened up to John 3 and said, you must be born again.

[21 : 28] And afterwards, she came up to him and said, preacher, why do you keep saying over and over, you must be born again? I don't know these details. This is how I imagine him swallowing hard, maybe praying that the Spirit will do a work in this lady's soul and with compassionate pastoral eyes to convey the grace that he's received.

He said, dear lady, because you must be born again. Well, remember, you're going to have to say all glory be to God here in just a moment because you cannot enter the kingdom of God unless you are born of the Spirit.

You cannot enjoy eternal life with God unless God gives you that life by the Holy Spirit. You are unable to choose salvation from sin by the power of your own will unless you are first regenerated by the Spirit of God sent from heaven.

To do what? The Spirit applies to your soul the finished work that Christ accomplished. Why? Because your salvation is an act of God.

All glory be to God. All glory be to God indeed. Well, that's why the new birth is necessary. Are you convinced the new birth is necessary for salvation?

[22 : 58] That God gets all the glory for salvation from the very start until the very end, the last breath before your soul is joined with Him. He gets the glory from start to finish.

Well, the second point is if regeneration is necessary, what is it? What is this new birth? That's our second point. I want to break this down into four responses.

Why? Or what regeneration is from this text. Number one, regeneration is a new birth. And the reason I say that is because Jesus, He is the creator of heaven and earth.

He had literally every metaphor at His disposal. He had the longest list of things He could compare regeneration to. I mean, just think of it.

Insects, you know, He could have picked anything. And what does He say regeneration is?

Regeneration is new birth. So we need to take from that metaphor all that Christ intended to load into it that pregnant phrase.

[23 : 59] Look at verse 3 one more time now. Not from Nicodemus' dark perspective, but from the words of Christ who came from heaven to show you the love of God. Verse 3, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Now, underline that phrase, born again. I want you to think about a baby inside the womb being born into the world.

And then also that word again. The word again can actually mean from above, which is a little bit different. It's like creation, you know, time and space is here. And what happens again, it's coming from somewhere beyond right here, so it actually makes sense.

If you're born, you're going to be born again. You're going to be born from above. What Jesus says in John 6, verses 44 and 45, no one, not even Nicodemus, not even you, no one, can come to me, says Jesus, unless the Father who sent me draws him.

So, this regeneration is from above. It is also unmerited. Now back to the baby. Does a baby merit their birth?

[25 : 17] I mean, is anyone sitting there thinking, I did a great job at getting born. I mean, I really, I really had to, you know, get my head out first and just do my best. I worked hard for that one.

No one is going to boast in your regeneration in the same way. Ephesians 2, for by grace you have been saved through faith. Listen to what Paul says next. And this is not your own doing.

It is the gift of God. Just to make sure we're not confused, he says, it's not a result of works so that no one may boast.

Finally, it's effectual. This new birth actually happens. A baby is not hypothetically born. You know, they are actually brought forth in the act of being born.

God actually saves sinners. He does not create the possibility that you may choose to then, you know, set yourself free. No, he actually saves you from darkness.

[26 : 18] Galatians 4, 9 says, but now that you have come to know God or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world?

Now listen to this. Whose slaves you once were. If a slave is there in slavery and bondage, the Bible does not describe it as Christ coming and creating the conditions that would allow you to then choose to be set free.

No, the word is ransomed. The blood of Jesus was the ransom price to purchase you, to remove you from that from which you were a slave, so you are actually saved.

You are actually saved. The new covenant of Christ to save sinners is effectual. Now it's also a cleansing work. Look at verse 5. Jesus says, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born, this is confusing, unless one is born of water and the Holy Spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of God. Now notice, in verse 3, Jesus says, you can't see the kingdom of God unless you're born again. And then verse 5, he opens it up even more. You cannot enter it.

[27 : 31] You couldn't see it. You still won't be able to enter it unless you're born of water and the Spirit. So by combining water and Spirit, he wants you to think of baptism. And I'll show you why this is.

Remember in John chapter 2? Remember how it was a wedding feast and there were these jars of cleansing. And the bride had to go through a cleansing ritual before she could consummate her marriage.

Cleansing comes before consummation. The washing of the Spirit preparing you, that's sanctification, it comes before the wedding supper of the Lamb.

So when the Spirit gives you new life, He's cleansing your entire being. He's reversing the curse of Adam. Body, mind, soul, all of those are cursed and tainted by sin.

And the Spirit comes in and says, no, I'm going to gradually cleanse and reform every aspect of your being and prepare you for heaven. Jesus said in Mark 1, 8, I have, I'm sorry, John the Baptist said, I have baptized you with water, he's connecting it, but there is one coming who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

[28 : 40] Water and the Spirit combine together. So cleansing, the picture of the thing it's pointing to, it's really representing the inward work of the Holy Spirit cleansing the inner being of those Christ saved.

I do want to make a comment about this. you must be born of water and the Spirit. I'm so excited that we have a number of our older children who love the Lord and who are growing as disciples in a hunger for the Word of God.

You need to hear these words. Jesus said, you must be born of water and the Spirit. He wants your baptism, the picture that we have with water, to be associated with the true cleansing that that points to of the Holy Spirit in you.

And that's what your parents and the church, that's what we're here to do with you, to help you discern that. Is the Holy Spirit cleansing you? Is He giving you a new heart, growing your love for Him and bearing that fruit that keeps with repentance?

So let's define it here. What is this cleansing work of the Spirit to regenerate? Well, J.I. Packer, he puts it this way. It is the implanting of the seed from which faith and repentance spring up when you are effectually called to God.

[29 : 52] The seed of the Holy Spirit put in you to bring forth this life when you hear God's word, the gospel that draws you to God. That's what regeneration is. Turn a few pages forward to 1 John chapter 3.

I want to show you where J.I. Packer gets this from. 1 John chapter 3 verse 9. Now this is our same human author. The Holy Spirit, you'll see everywhere you turn in the Bible it's the same doctrine.

Now the same human author, John again, in 1 John chapter 3 verse 9. Look at what he says. He says, No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot, just like you could not save yourself, now with the Spirit in you, you cannot keep on sinning. What a great promise. Because he has been born of God. What is regeneration? It's a new birth. It's a cleansing work of God in your life. Number three, it's above man's comprehension. Look at verse 8.

[31 : 09] Jesus, knowing that Nicodemus is very confused and still in the dark, he tells them in verse 8, the wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

It's above your comprehension. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. I want you to see how the New Hampshire Statement of Faith that we subscribe to, how it pulls all these truths together.

Listen to this. regeneration consists in the giving of a new and holy disposition to an otherwise rebellious heart. It is accomplished in a way that is above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit and in connection with divine truth.

As you hear the gospel, you hear the truth, the Spirit works. Thus, securing, securing, guaranteeing your voluntary obedience to the gospel.

What a beautiful paradox. What a glorious mystery. Praise God that it's above our comprehension. It's just true. And the Spirit helps us to believe it is true. I want to show you this same truth now.

[32 : 24] Acts 26, 18. You can either turn there or just listen carefully. Acts 26, verse 18. This is when Jesus calls Paul to be an apostle.

But it's not the event itself. It's Paul telling his own testimony. The story of his regeneration and his conversion. Here's how Paul describes it. Jesus told Paul, Paul, through your preaching to all the nations, not only Jews but to the Gentiles, to every people, through your preaching to the nations, listen to what Jesus says, I will open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to the light and from the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

God will open their eyes. They will turn. Regeneration, conversion. The fourth thing that regeneration is, it's that.

It's the gift of believing in heavenly things. Look at verse 12. It's our last verse of the text. Jesus says, if I have told you of earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

So it's a gift to be able to believe in heavenly things. You don't get to boast about the fact that you believe and you understand and you have faith in these heavenly spiritual realities.

[33 : 54] It's a gift. You must understand of heavenly things. Without the work of the Holy Spirit inside you, you will always remain bound to earthly things. So regeneration is an eye-opening experience.

In 1 Corinthians 12, 3, Paul writes, no one can say, you cannot, you're incapable of saying, Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit.

Regeneration is a fulfillment of God's promise. This is the last text. I want you to turn to this one. I need you to see this one with your own eyes. Turn to Ezekiel chapter 36.

Regeneration is a fulfillment of God's promise. What God says, He is Jehovah. He is our covenant Lord.

What He says, He fulfills. So Ezekiel chapter 36, verse 25 and 26. Now the context is important here.

[34 : 58] The people of Israel have been banished from the land. All of their hopes and earthly promises are gone. And now God raises up a prophet, Ezekiel, from exile to this people without a land, without any earthly blessings.

And what is it that He wants them to still believe and hold on to as their hope? It's these words. Verse 25, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

26, I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

God promises He will do this for His people. regeneration is a new birth, a cleansing work of God. It's above man's comprehension.

It's a gift of believing these heavenly truths that opens your eyes to them and it fulfills everything God has promised. So our conclusion to the second point, what is it?

[36 : 07] It's really been given to us already. You can turn back a couple pages. John chapter 1 verses 1, 11, 12, and 13. Jesus said, or actually John says, of Jesus, He came, so this is John 1 verse 11, He came to His own and His own people did not receive Him.

They had hearts of stone. They are in darkness like Nicodemus. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, how did they believe? Because they were born of the Spirit.

He opened their eyes and to them He gave the right to become children of God. In case you're wondering or want to fight it like Nicodemus, here it is, who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God.

So here's the promise now to you. Our same proposition, if you have had your eyes open to believe in Christ, you will enter the kingdom of God because you are born of the Spirit.

You will enjoy eternal life with God once you are given this new life promised by the Holy Spirit. You are saved from sin by the power of God who regenerated you by the Spirit sent from heaven.

[37 : 25] He applies the work of Christ to your soul and He cleanses you. He prepares your soul to rule with King Jesus over the new heavens and the new earth forever.

Ready to call back one more time? All glory be to God. Your wondrous salvation is an act of God. All glory be to God.

All glory. All glory. Start to finish. Be to God. I don't want you to leave here wondering am I regenerated? I want to give you seven points briefly to reflect on and these come from Benjamin Keech's Catechism of 1693.

Number one, you are regenerated if God has given you the gift of faith. Has God worked faith in you? See, the Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ which is faith working in you. Number two, you are regenerated if you have heard or maybe you hear now Christ calling you to follow Him as your Savior and your Lord.

[38 : 34] That means you are united to Him. His righteousness is your righteousness. Number three, you are regenerated if His Spirit continues to patiently convince you of your sin and your need for Him every day, every week.

Number four, you are regenerated if God shines the light of His Word on your mind so that you are growing in your knowledge of Christ. Number five, you are regenerated if God is increasingly, not perfectly until we join Him in Heaven, but increasingly, season after season, renewing your will so that you will seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.

I want to illustrate this one with something that Martin Luther, that great reformer in the 1500s said in his book *The Bondage of the Will* about total depravity.

He said, now, with a regenerated heart, I have the comfortable certainty, there's a great phrase, it's a comfortable certainty that I please God not by reason of the merit of my works, the opposite of Nicodemus, but by reason of His mercy and His favor which has been promised to me.

We anchor our hopes and our promise on His word. He's faithful. Luther says, if I work too little one day and He does not impute the condemnation to me, but with fatherly compassion, He pardons me again and He makes me better.

[40 : 15] Number six, you are regenerated if your heart overflows with praise to God and you're so quick to say, all glory be to God because He's persuaded you and enabled you to embrace Christ who has been freely offered to you in the gospel.

And number seven, the last one for application is that if you are regenerated, if you've experienced a spiritual new birth, you treasure Christ.

You treasure Him as your Savior and your Lord. Do you treasure Christ? And I want to illustrate treasuring Christ from Nicodemus himself from this same book.

In John chapter 19 toward the very end of this gospel account, we read in verse 39 that Nicodemus also, along with those who treasure Christ, even as He was hanging on the tree, the same Nicodemus who earlier had come to Jesus by night, he came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds of weight.

Did Nicodemus treasure Christ? Well, that's the last thing this same apostle tells us of Nicodemus. He's at the foot of the cross.

[41 : 40] He's bringing His savings account to help preserve and embalm the body of Jesus. And only the Lord knows His heart.

But if you had visited Jesus by night and you were left in darkness, you walk away thinking, this is foolishness. The Holy Spirit seems to have brought Nicodemus once again to the foot of the cross. and as they're removing those long spikes from His ankles and His wrists, the body of God Himself, Creator of heaven and earth, who took on flesh, paid for the sins of everyone who will believe in His finished work.

We treasure Him. I think Nicodemus appears to have treasured Christ and it made me think, how do we even get this account in John chapter 3?

We don't necessarily know that John the Apostle heard any of this. It could be that Nicodemus was part of that early church and when you hear Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, giving his testimony, bearing witness of the work of Christ, this is how Nicodemus wanted to tell his testimony and John was delighted to record it.

[43 : 07] So just like John the Baptist, just like each one of them, Christ must increase, I must decrease. So are you regenerated? Well, tell your testimony.

Ask the Lord to give you that opportunity and in your testimony it will become evident. Do you treasure Christ? Christ. In your testimony, does God save you by an act that only God could do so that He gets all the glory?

Then find comfort. Find that comforting certainty that He's given you a new heart and He who began a good work in you will see it through to completion at the return of Christ.

Can we say it one more time? Your salvation is an act of God. All glory be to God. Let's pray from 2 Timothy 1.9.

O God, You have saved us and You have called us to a holy calling not because of our works but because of Your own purpose and grace which You gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages begin.

[44 : 25] Thanks be to God. We will take a few moments next. all right. All right. All right.

All right.