

Born Again

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[0 : 00] Well, if you have your Bibles with you, or with your Bibles with you, we'll turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 14. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 14.

So, 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 14. We're going to read through to the end of verse 17.

Now hear God's Word. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this, that one has died for all, therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore we regard no one according to the flesh, even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old is gone. The old is passed away. Behold, all things have become new. We thank God for his Word. And I want to begin this evening by addressing just three words.

In fact, the whole sermon in many ways is not three words in length. I heard that. But it is only addressing three words.

[2 : 01] And it's those words found in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 16, from now on. They're striking words.

I mean, really, they have a depth, they are full of meaning, and they have a force to them. From now on.

Now, I can really say as I stand here this evening, reading those words out to you, that I have really been struck by the power of those three words. You know, and I'm not the sort of person that speaks often in terms of power.

I'm struck by the power of something. But I can really say as I read these three words, even this evening again, that I'm struck by the force, gentle force, but nevertheless the force and power of those three words from now on.

Now, of course, by the wrong, they don't mean much. You know, from now on, you know, you need to ask other things. But when you put it in the context of everything else Paul is saying, they begin to mean everything.

[3 : 16] What Paul is saying is that something's happened. And so from now on, it's different. A big change has occurred. So from now on, things are going to be different.

Something has changed, not just in the world, but, you know, something has changed even towards me, regarding me. You know, Paul is saying that from now on, I no longer regard people in the way that I used to.

You know, I look at some people before I was saved and, you know, I'd want them dead. You know, but now that I'm saved, you know, I don't look at people in the same way as I used to.

And then he goes on to say something really remarkable, and this is where I want our focus to be. He says, from now on, you know, now that I'm saved, I don't even look at Christ in the same way that I did.

That's the point. From now on, listen to it. Just listen to it. From now on, I no longer regard Christ in the way that I used to regard Christ.

[4 : 30] In other words, Paul is saying, look, I look at Jesus in a totally different way than I used to look at him. You know, after his death and his resurrection, and after the fact that I have been made a new creation by Jesus, from now on, I can no longer see Jesus in the same way as I did before I was saved.

That's what he's saying. That's how striking that is. But I want you to notice the order, because it's the order that gives us its power. It's the order that this comes in that gives us its meaningful force.

From now on, because I'm saved, from now on, I see Jesus differently. You know, Paul wants us to be struck by the weight of the verse, but he also wants us to be struck by the reality of seeing Jesus differently.

And he says, the only way you're going to be able to see Jesus differently is by not underestimating the change that has happened in your life by being born again.

From now on, now that you're born again, from now on, don't underestimate that change, because it's that very change that now causes you to see Jesus differently.

[5 : 56] It's because you have been born again, you see Jesus for who he really is. It's because you have been born again, that you no longer regard other people in the same way that you used to.

And you don't even regard Jesus in the same way that you used to. It is because you are, as Paul says in verse 17, a brand new creation, that you see Jesus differently.

So he's saying, look, don't underestimate the change that has happened in your life by being born again. Then he says, of course, verse 17, that you're a new creation.

You know, remember, that's a description. It's not a command. It's not an imperative. He's not giving you something to do. It's a description. He's rather describing who you are, or rather what you are.

You are a, you're a brand new person. Get that into your skull, get that into your brain, get that right down into your heart. You are a brand new person.

[7 : 00] That's how God looks at you when he looks at you now. As a brand new, perfect person, your life is hidden in Christ. You could not be any more perfect before God than what you are right now.

Now, you are a new, you are born again, a new creation. Now, the word born again is, is sort of famously mentioned in John chapter three.

That's the famous mention, isn't it, of unless you are born again. What does it mean? What does it mean? Well, if you, if you split the two words up and you go back to the Greek, this isn't to impress you.

It's simply for you to get to understand the meaning of it. Born, in the Greek, means generation. A generation.

Again, means a recurrence. And so when you put the two words together, the word that you get is regeneration.

[8 : 04] Regeneration. I don't know if you've ever heard of that theological term, regeneration. Well, regeneration is when something is dead comes to life.

You're born again. It's much simpler in the English to be born again. But regeneration, God has redone something.

You're created in the image of God, but now you are, you are born again into a new life. And that's what Paul says has happened to you. Now that you belong to Jesus, you are born again.

You have this new life. You are a new creation. By belonging to Jesus, you are in a brand new state of being. Now, here's why it's so important.

I mean, really, really important. I'm claiming that it's important, but now I have to prove it. Those words from now on are equally as important, but here's why.

[9 : 04] Or here's at least one of the reasons why. Don't turn a description into a command. It's a basic mistake.

Absolute basic mistake. But don't do it. It's a bit like getting the gospel back to front. In fact, you are actually getting the gospel back to front from now on.

To be born again is a state of being. It is a description of what you are like. Jesus in John 3 says to Nicodemus, not you must be born again.

He says, unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. Jesus isn't giving Nicodemus a command. It's not an imperative. He's not telling him to do something.

Rather, he's describing the sort of person you need to be in order to see the kingdom of God. What kind of person do I need to be in order to see the kingdom of God? I need to be a born again person.

[10 : 09] I need to be a person that has a brand new life. That's the type of person I need to be. The point should be obvious then. Could I born myself the first time?

No. No. So, can I born myself again? No. That's why it's not a command. That's why it's not an imperative.

He doesn't say, you must be born again. It's to get the gospel back to front. It's a description of what you need to be in order to see the kingdom of God.

It is not a command to follow. It is not an imperative. It is not something for you to do. Now, when you're regenerated, you're born again. When you have new life, born again.

When you are a new creation, you're born again. When you're all those things, you'll get to see the kingdom of God. But unless you are born again, you're not going to get to see the kingdom of God at all.

[11 : 10] And that's why Paul uses those words strikingly in verse 16, from now on. Notice how it happens. He doesn't say, you know, I saw Christ differently.

And from then on, I was born again. It's the other way around. He says, I was born again.

This one who suffered and died and rose again gave me new life. I'm a new creation. And from now on, from now on, I no longer look at Christ in the same way that I used to.

That's why it's impressive. You must be born again is not only unbiblical.

It is actually a cruel command. For this reason, and I'll state it again, you cannot give birth to yourself.

[12 : 11] No child can bring themselves into the world. It doesn't happen like that. It has to be the will of another. And so new birth is exactly the same.

So to say to someone, you know, you must be born again, well, that's a description. It can never be a command. Because it's something that they cannot do. But God can.

So why is it important? Well, it's important in order to get the gospel right. Unless you are that kind of person, you're not going to get to see Jesus in all of his beauty.

You're not going to get to see Jesus for who he is. So what's the issue here? What's the point being made regarding evangelism?

Well, the point regarding evangelism is, don't turn a description into a command. Don't turn this very basic description of the type of person that gets to see the kingdom of God into a command.

[13 : 15] Don't do that. That's not what it's there for. The new creation, you're a new creation. That's not a command. That's a description as well.

From now on, because you are a new creation, because you are born again, you will get to see the kingdom of God. But until then, you're not going to. From now on, I treat people differently and I see them differently.

From now on, I see Jesus differently. From now on, from what? Well, from now on, from the fact that Christ has saved me, that he has changed my heart, that he has removed the blindness from my eyes, that I can spiritually see by faith, God, Christ, the Spirit of God, and other people in the way that I am meant to.

Why? Because I'm born again. I have a brand new life that enables me with a whole range of spiritual virtues and abilities and blessings that I didn't have before I was saved.

One of those is sight. Now that I'm born again, unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. But now I am.

[14 : 33] So never underestimate, never underestimate the change that has come upon your life for why you love Jesus. Never underestimate why you can see the things by faith that nobody else can see.

Never underestimate the powerful change that has come upon your life. And don't try and get other people to see what you can see. They're not going to be able to do it. They're only going to be able to do it if they're born again.

So don't make the basic mistake of turning a description into a command. And don't make the mistake of underestimating the powerful change that has happened in your life.

The only reason why you can see all of these things to be true, and the only reason why you can love Jesus and trust Him. There's another issue here, and it's to do with relevance.

Yeah, is Jesus relevant today? Now the world's going to say, you know, no, not really. But here's the thing.

[15 : 43] The world has always said that Jesus is irrelevant. Scripture even affirms that the unbelieving world will consider Jesus to be irrelevant.

In Paul's day, the Scripture says that cursed is everyone by God. Cursed is everyone by God who hangs on a tree. Or Jesus hanged on a tree.

What relevance does that have to people other than the fact that that man is accursed of God? Well, we see it differently. Right, that's Paul's point.

Why do we see it differently? You see, the message of Jesus to some people is a stumbling block. To other people, it is foolishness. Paul's point is, from a worldly point of view, Jesus is always going to be irrelevant.

From a worldly point of view, Jesus is always going to be irrelevant. Why? Because they can't see what we see. Now, from a Christian's point of view, you tell me, is Jesus irrelevant to you?

[16 : 56] Or is he relevant? Do you love him? Do you trust him? How relevant is, well, you're going to say, very relevant.

Yeah, where else can we go, Lord? You have the words of eternal life. Yeah, Jesus is very relevant. Why? But why? From now on, he's relevant.

But he wasn't always relevant, was he? But from now on, he is. But what's the from now on, on from? Well, it's on from your new birth.

Never underestimate the change that is the code. Never underestimate why you understand why Jesus is relevant. Why you appreciate the relevancy of Jesus.

Why you love and trust in the relevancy of Jesus. So here's another important point for evangelism. A really important point.

- [17 : 57] Don't change the message. Don't change the message. Don't change the message in the hope that you'll somehow make Jesus relevant to people. It's not going to happen.
- It would be like making the color red relevant to a blind person. It just can't be done.
- So don't change the message. God knows what he's doing. God knows how to save people. That's what he does. That's what he did by giving his son to the cross.
- So don't go messing around with the message. Don't come up with your newfangled ideas about, well, if I said this, and if I did that, and if I just made a twist here and there, or perhaps if I understood just how blind the person was, or what type of blindness he had, I might just be able to get through it.
- He's blind. He is dead in his sins. He has to be made alive. And that's what God does. And God does that with the gospel.
- [19 : 10] It's a mystery in many ways, isn't it? But it is how God works. You know, Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry Bones, God speaks and brings life into a place where there is no life.
- Just have confidence in the fact of speaking God's words to people, and I will guarantee that new life will occur. Because they're the only words that can do it.
- Because his words are creative words. The garden to begin with. The world has it begun. God speaks and things get made. So have confidence in God.
- Don't go messing around with it. Just trust that it'll do what it says it'll do. So Paul says, look, you know that for your sake, Jesus suffered and died and was raised.
- So from now on, that's why you think about Jesus differently. That's why you love him. But those in the world, yeah, they're not going to listen to Jesus.
- [20 : 14] Not really in the same way you are. They're not going to love Jesus like you love Jesus. No, understand and don't underestimate just what a change has occurred in your life.
- So what have we seen so far? Well, so far we've seen this. Number one, don't turn a description into a command. You must be, don't do it.
- And secondly, don't mess around with the message. Just let God speak. Know what he says and speak it to others, but just say what he says.
- So we move on. And we move on surprisingly to perhaps something that you may or may not have considered, and it's this. Jesus was born again.
- Jesus died and he rose. Jesus was born again. Now, he's not born again in the same way we are, though he did take upon himself our sins.
- [21 : 24] And the wages of sin is death and he died. He laid down his own life. And it's not that he didn't, it's not that he had a birth in the first place. No, he is, he is God the Son. He is the eternal Son of God.
- You know, or God the Son eternal. He is, he is God himself and he is eternal. But nevertheless, there was the incarnation where Christ came into human form.
- He had a first birth in many ways. You know, I think that, that's what makes, you know, Eve and Mary so, such, of such prominence in Scripture.
- You know, you know, who is, who is the central figure in Genesis 3? Eve. And who is Mary? Well, Mary is the new Eve.
- Eve is the mother of all living. Well, how can she be? Because every child that she has will come to death. No, not every child. She's the mother of all living for this reason, because through her, Christ came.
- [22 : 32] Through her, Mary came. And through Mary, Christ came. Jesus comes into the world. He had his first birth. He suffered, and he died.

He rose, and then he was born again. Yeah, his, his born again state is not the same as ours, but nevertheless, the point being made is, look, if Jesus did not rise from death, like we do from our spiritual death, then nothing else can rise from the dead.

Nothing else can change. If Jesus does not come out of death, everything else stays as it is. This is why Paul says this, and if Christ had not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins.

1 Corinthians 15, verse 17. In other words, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then neither could you. That's where you would still be.

Romans 6, you know, we died with Christ, we rise with Christ. That's the point. Now, think it through. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then I wouldn't.

[23 : 47] But now that Jesus has, and I have new life, what does that mean? Well, this is what it means. You and me, or you and I, rather, get the English correct, owe everything to him.

We owe absolutely everything to Jesus. We're not our own. Everything has changed. I have changed. The world has changed. Everything owns everything to Jesus.

This is why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 15, that those who live, those who are born again, those who are a new creation, that those who live might no longer live for themselves.

In other words, that's what they were doing before they were saved. That's what we were doing before we were saved. We lived for ourselves. But now that we're saved, from now on, now we don't do that anymore.

Why? Because that's the identification of an unsaved person. They do what they want to do. But the identification of a saved person is that we do what Christ wants to do in a world where everybody else is doing what they want to do.

[25 : 02] That's what makes you stand out as a believer. That Christ, who for our sake, died and rose, that's why you think differently about him.

From now on, three little words. From now on, they speak of massive change. They tell you not to underestimate the change. They explain why you are to live differently.

From now on, just three little words that say, look, everything has changed. Well, here's the exhortation.

Here's the exhortation application as we close. Are we then, you know, as we bring this message to a close, are we living the change that has actually occurred?

That's the question, isn't it? Are we living in the change that has actually occurred within our life? And that's a challenge, isn't it? If everything has changed, am I living in that change?

[26 : 12] Or to put it another way, this is perhaps a little bit more punchy, who am I living for? You know, am I living for myself? Or am I living for Jesus?

You know, do I wake up in the morning and ask myself the question, you know, am I going to live my way or am I going to live the way of Jesus? Who am I living for?

So don't underestimate the question. Here's why. Because if you can answer that question, are you born again? Then you can also know whether or not you're living for Jesus.

I can't answer that. I can hazard a guess. I could probably get close on a few of you. I could probably be spot on with a few more. You ask yourself, who am I living for?

Understand what Jesus has done for you. Don't make the mistake of underestimating it. Here's why. If you underestimate the change that has occurred in your life, you're not going to live different.

- [27 : 26] You're going to live just like the way you used to. Why? Because here's why. Salvation does not equip you to know everything about Jesus. Salvation saves you.
- Then you grow up in the knowledge of God. Salvation doesn't do it for you. Salvation saves you.
- Then you grow up in the knowledge of God. Get to know the God who saved you. From now on, when you understand that, from now on, your attitude and your love for him and the way that you try, it's going to be different.
- Totally different. So here's the question. Who am I living for? Learn to live with the question daily. Get it in your diary.
- Make it as regular as, I was going to say Bible readings. No, make it daily. And ask yourself the question daily. Who am I living for today? As you wake up each morning, who am I living for?
- [28 : 29] As you go out into work and you serve God in a whole number of ways, who am I living for? Who am I doing this for? You know, as you come to church, even this evening, what am I here for?
- You know, one of my favorite tests, I test myself with it all the time, is this. If you remove someone's position in the church or the position can no longer exist, would they still be here?
- See, sometimes, it's very hard to tell where people are with Christ until they no longer fulfill the position that they once fulfilled.
- Remove the position. If they go, that tells you where their heart has been for the last 10 years, perhaps. That's the test. Why are you here?
- Who are you doing this for? Why am I here? What am I doing this for? Well, if the answer is not Jesus, let's pack our bags and go somewhere else.
- [29 : 33] So, remember Paul's words. From now on, something's changed. I have changed. You have changed. The world has changed.
- Everything has changed. So, from now on, I'm not going to live for myself. I'm not going to follow my own will. I'm not going to do my own ideas or my own desires. You know, I can do that, but I'm not.
- Why not? From now on, things are different. I want to follow God. You ought to want to follow God.
- So, don't underestimate why you can. Don't underestimate why you can follow God. It's because He's made you alive. You are born again.
- So, from now on, don't live your own life. Live the life that God has given you. Don't live for yourself. Don't do that. Rather live for Him.
- [30 : 33] Understand the change that has happened to you. And then, from then on, or from now on this evening, you're going to understand, you know, does the world revolve around you?
- No. Does it revolve around Him? Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. the world revolves around Jesus.
- So, from now on, you know, know who you live for. You know, know who you belong to. Know who it is that has made you alive. Amen.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.