

Chapter Five

Born Again

Signs of Life

We learned in the previous chapter that one day our world will be regenerated. All of creation will be renewed. There will be a new heaven and a new earth.¹ The kingdom of God will fill the earth with righteousness, joy and peace. And to see and experience this coming kingdom of God we need to be regenerated or born again of God's Spirit.²

This new birth happens to us when we confess that Jesus Christ is our Lord and we believe that God has raised him up from the dead.³ But how can we know for sure that we are born again? How can we know that we have been regenerated and that there is divine life in us? So many people experience the new birth, but they worry about and question the reality of their salvation. Is there a way for us to know the certainty of our salvation? Yes, there are signs that point to the new life we have in Christ. And we will examine those in 1 John. But let's begin in John 3.

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
(John 3:5-8)

What the Lord Jesus Christ means in verse 8, is that just as you cannot see the wind, you cannot actually see the work of the Spirit when you are born

¹ Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:20, 21; Romans 8:18-21; 2 Peter 3: 10-13

² John 3:1-7; Titus 3:3-7

³ John 3:16; Romans 10:9, 10

again. But in the same way that you can see the effects of the wind, when you are born again there is evidence of the new life within you. Remember, being born again means there is a qualitative change at the core of who you are. We are given a new heart. God's Spirit is within us. We are a new creation; a partaker of the divine nature. So there will be evidence or signs of this new life within you.

The apostle John's first letter is devoted to showing us the life signs that prove that we are saved and born again. John said that he wrote his letter so that we would know that we have everlasting life and also that our joy might be full.⁴ Now, there are seven signs mentioned in this letter that demonstrate that we are born again children of God. But before we look at these seven vital life signs let me say that there are no perfect Christians. And if that is the case, and it is, then there are no perfect Christian churches.

Growing up as a child of God is a process that we will never fully complete in this life. We live in a sinful world and there are temptations and trials and challenges. And just as children get bumps and bruises as they grow up, don't fear when you stumble as you grow to be more and more like Christ. God understands that we are children, learning and growing. And He will forgive us if we are honest and confess our sins. Here is what John wrote on this subject.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

(1 John 1:8-10)

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

(1 John 2:1, 2)

⁴ 1 John 5:13; 1:4

As long as we live there will be times when we sin. When it happens the honest thing to do is to confess it and ask for forgiveness. And we should realize that we have Christ as an advocate or as a helper to give us strength to overcome temptations to further sin. Also as our advocate our Lord Jesus prays for us to God. We can have confidence that the good work God began in us He will absolutely complete.⁵

Now, the **first vital sign** of new life with us is that we hear God's Word and we keep His commandments.

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.

By this we know that we are in Him.

(1 John 2:3-5)

When we are born again our lives will show a habit of obedience to God's Word. As mentioned earlier, we will never be perfect, but being a child of God there will be a desire in our hearts to hear, believe and obey Scripture.

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are of the world.

Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them.

⁶ We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

(1 John 4:4-6)

We know that we are saved when we are eager to hear the Word of God and not the words of this fallen, sinful world. We are eager for the apostles' teaching; that is we desire to learn what Scripture tells us about God and about all of life. In Acts 2:47 we are told that in the early church the believers "devoted

⁵ John 10:27-30; Philippians 1:6

themselves to the apostles' teaching." When you are born again you love God's Word. You believe what Jesus said is true "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."⁶

There are some people who do not want to hear the Word of God. For some people it goes in one ear and then out the other.⁷ But when you are born again you love God's Word and you strive to keep His commandments. The apostle Peter tells us to "desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby."⁸ The **second vital sign** is that those who are born again love others, especially those in the family of God.

In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.
¹¹ For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹² not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

¹³ Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death. ¹⁵ Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.
(1 John 3:10-14)

There are two stunning statements here. One is that Cain was of the wicked one. And his self-righteousness and hate resulted in the murder of Able. Hatred is the seed that leads to murder. Conversely, the second stunning statement is that "we know that we have passed out of death" and into life

⁶ Matthew 4:4

⁷ Mark 4:1-9, 13-20

⁸ 1 Peter 2:2

“because we love the brethren.” And this love is evidenced not just in words and sentiment but in deeds.

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹ And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.
(1 John 3:16-19)

We are called to the same standard of love that Christ has for all of us. His was the supreme sacrifice of his life in death. Our sacrifice is in serving one another in meeting needs. In Philippians 2:4 we are told, “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.
(1 John 4:7, 8)

God our Father is the essence of love. And if we are His children His nature is in us. And we will love one another as he loves us.

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to

love one another.
(1 John 4:9-11)

God's love for us is sacrificial and beneficial. We did not deserve this love or earn it in any way. Being born of God we are to love others in the same way. And sometimes people need to be loved when they least deserve it. As Romans 5:8 reveals "God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." Our love is to be real, practical, beneficial and even at times sacrificial. The **third vital sign** of those who are born again is that we do not love the world.

Do not love the world or the things
in the world. If anyone loves the world,
the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust
of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and
the pride of life—is not of the Father
but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is
passing away, and the lust of it; but
he who does the will of God abides
forever.

(1 John 2:15-17)

When we are born again the love of God our Father is in us.⁹ And we should love what He loves and hate what He hates. There are things that are wicked and evil in our world. And Romans 12:9 exhorts us to, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good." Even when the things of this world are all dressed up and sparkle and entice us, we need to learn to see beyond the glitter to not be deceived. The **fourth vital sign** of life for those who are children of God is that we confess that Jesus is the Christ.

Who is a liar but he who denies
that Jesus is the Christ? He is
antichrist who denies the Father
and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies
the Son does not have the Father
either; he who acknowledges the
Son has the Father also.

(1 John 2:22, 23)

⁹ Romans 5:5

To deny that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one of God, is to deny God, for God testified that Jesus is His Son.¹⁰ And if you deny that Jesus is the Christ you cannot be saved.

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.
(1 John 4:15)

What a remarkable statement this is! If you confess, if you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then God abides in you and you in God. The realm in which you live, all the time, is God.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.
(1 John 5:1)

No one is saved or born again by just believing in God. We are not born again by being religious. But we are born of God when we believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Messiah, God's anointed servant. God was at work in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Himself.¹¹ Therefore there is no salvation in any other person than Jesus Christ.¹² When we confess that Jesus is who God says he is we are born of God. And we not only love God, we love everyone who is born of God. The **fifth vital sign** is that we strive to live a life of obedience and faith, we desire to live a holy and righteous life.

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.
(1 John 2:5, 6)

Our Lord lived a life of love and faithful obedience to God and we should desire to do the same. And this includes not only faith, but our kindness, mercy and love to all. Our lifestyle is one of striving to do what is good and right.

¹⁰ Matthew 17:5

¹¹ Acts 2:22; 10:38; 2 Corinthians 5:19

¹² John 14:16; Acts 4:2

And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.
(1 John 2:28, 29)

If we are born of God then we are a partaker of His nature. This means that we practice living in righteousness rather than getting better at sinning.

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. ⁸ He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

¹⁰ In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor *is* he who does not love his brother.
(1 John 3:4-10)

A born again child of God makes it a joyful habit to trust God and to worship Him, to fellowship with other believers, to pray to give and to serve. Although we still have a sin nature and we sin and stumble, the dominant pattern of our lives is that we make it a practice to strive to be holy and righteous like Christ.

The Greek word translated “practice” is poieo and it means to practice as you would an art or musical or athletic skill. Some areas of Christian growth and holy living are easier for one believer than it is for another. Financial giving may be easier for you than for me. Being tender hearted and forgiving may be easier for you than someone else. Some trust God much faster than others. But all of us should desire to strive to grow and mature in the faith. And we all mature at our own pace.

But if we are not reading God's Word and learning the truth and walking in love and worshipping God with the family of God, we should take stock of our lives and our priorities and do the right thing. The **sixth vital sign** of new life is the gift of God's Spirit within us.

And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

²⁴ Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit [which]¹³ He has given us.
(1 John 2:23, 24)

We know that God abides in us, we know that we are born again, by the Spirit of God is in us. Literally the word “by” should be “out from” the Spirit. Every believer can manifest the Spirit—evidences come out from the Spirit. We can speak in tongues, interpret tongues, and prophecy. We can receive from God a word of knowledge and word of wisdom; we can discern the presence of spirits. We can evidence great faith to bring about gifts of healings and workings of miracles at God's direction.¹⁴ We can also see the fruit of the Spirit in our character. Our lives can be full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.¹⁵ Through the Word of God and the Spirit of God we are becoming more and more like Christ.

No one has seen God at any time.
If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. ¹³By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has

¹³ The Spirit is not a person in the Godhead. The Spirit is the active power and life of God in Christ in us.

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

¹⁵ Galatians 5:22, 23

given us of His Spirit.
(1 John 4:12, 13)

The Christian life is more than believing certain things. It means that we become new people, by means of the new birth. Through the Spirit we are regenerated and washed clean from sin. We have a new nature and everlasting life. Finally, the **seventh vital sign** of new life is that we overcome the world.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
(1 John 5:1-5)

The Greek word translated “overcome”¹⁶ means to conquer. It means to achieve a victory that is evident to all. Jesus Christ used this word to describe himself. In John 16:33 he said, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

You and I no longer need to pattern our lives according to the course of this world.¹⁷ We no longer need to fear what it fears or love what it loves. This fallen, sinful world no longer holds us spell bound. Our thoughts and affections can be set on godly things. As each new day dawns what we think and how we behave is shaped by the Word of God. This is because we are born again. In Christ we are a new creation. And when Christ who is our life appears, then we too shall appear with him in glory.

¹⁶ *Nikao*

¹⁷ Ephesians 2:1-3: Romans 12:1, 2

