

Is There Truly a New You? John 3:1-15; Ephesians 4:17-32

As I begin this morning, know that you will be challenged today. Many of you are professing Christians, but have you truly considered what that means? The Bible informs us that Christians are to be different. We are to be “new” and not retain any portion of the “old”. If you claim to be a Christian this morning; guess what? The Bible teaches that you must prove it out through the life you live. If you are truly a child of God by faith through Jesus Christ, then it must be understood that your profession of faith brings with it a radical inward change, and when that radical inward change takes place, the result becomes an outward expression of the heart that is much different from before. This idea can be related to God’s word to Israel through the prophet Ezekiel during their captivity in Babel. God reminded them about their preservation when He instructed Ezekiel to tell them,

“You shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And 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. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

You see, one of the reasons for your salvation is to ensure that your life will be lived in manner which glorifies God. When you live a totally surrendered life, the Spirit of God “causes” you to walk in His ways and follow His rules. This then becomes one of God’s “non-negotiables”. When the Holy Spirit takes over, your habits change, your language gets cleaned up, self-centered motivations are overhauled and replaced with things like humility and service to others. Your ability to avoid moral wrongdoing increases as you are filled with a God sized level of satisfaction. It’s remarkable the changes which take place in the life of the new believer. A new heart, a new spirit, a new level of obedience, a new person! Amen!

One of the things I think of when I think about what it’s like to become a new believer, I’m reminded of Jesus’ interaction with Nicodemus. Let’s look at it together. **Read John 3:1-15.** As I was studying for this message, something stood out to me that I had never picked up on in this story. Look at how Jesus responds to Nicodemus’ first question in verse 3. He says, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* In responding to Nicodemus, Jesus spoke of mankind’s need for salvation. Here, the word “one” carries the plural meaning of “everyone”. Jesus, speaking to one of the prominent Jewish religious leaders of the day, said that every person needed salvation, otherwise, they would never enter God’s family. Jesus continues in this manner when he responds again to Nicodemus in verses 5 and 6. But, look what happens when Jesus brings it to a more personal level in verse 7. There is a slight, but very powerful change in how Jesus addresses Nicodemus here. Jesus says to him, *“You must be born again.”* Perhaps, Jesus is also saying this to you this morning. If you have any desire to spend eternity in heaven, then you must understand these words as well. Jesus is calling and His words still hold true today. *“You must be born again.”*

Think about what Nicodemus was struggling with. When a person is born, they have no choice in skin color, hair color, personality, what dad or mom look like, what they will look like, and what family they will belong to. Nicodemus couldn’t comprehend what Jesus was saying to him because of his understanding about how one’s natural birth normally occurs. Jesus wanted him to

see that “being born again” was only like one’s physical birth in that both occur because of God’s doing, and not ours. To be born again was to accept and receive a new spiritual birth. New birth in Christ stands as a life reset. It brings new life, a new heart, a new spirit, new experiences, new relationships, new purposes, new love, and yes, a new family. Jesus confirmed what God shared with Israel by teaching us that our new birth makes us think differently and because of God’s presence in our new life, it “causes” us to also behave differently. This is where our challenge comes this morning. **Is there truly a new you?** Have you given your life to Jesus? Have you been born again? Has the old been replaced with the new? Do you believe the words of 2 Corinthians 5:17 that I mentioned a few weeks back? *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.”* Do you see yourself as a person who lives for Christ, because of Christ, and as Paul teaches us in Ephesians, as one who *“walks worthy of the calling you have received”*?

I want to encourage you this morning to study Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. In it you will discover many ways our lives can “prove” the authenticity of our faith. Do you believe that because of Christ you are redeemed? Do you know that Jesus has forgiven you? Do you know that you are blessed with all spiritual blessings? Do you know that you were made new in Christ for the purpose of doing “good works”? Every believer in this place has been adopted into God’s family and is currently being built together as a unified body where God dwells! Do you believe in the power of God that dwells in your heart as the only power which allows you to live a life “worthy of the calling”?

Let me also share with you Paul’s thoughts on who you are as a believer in a new life. **Read Ephesians 4:17-32.**

We have an opportunity this morning and over the next few weeks to get serious about who we truly are. Are you ready to be honest with yourself? Are you willing to perform your own personal heart surgery with the intent of discovering weaknesses and areas which drastically need spiritual improvement? You guys have heard me say this before; if I’m living my life the way God desires, then I must develop an attitude where I seek to decrease, so that he can increase. There must be more of Him and less of me. If you are anything like me, I hope you are. My desire is to come to a place where my outside life is a direct reflection of my inside life. My desire is for God’s righteousness and holiness to be on display for the world to see. And let me be honest with you about this. After all, I’m asking you to be honest with yourself. I have a lot to work on and a long way to go. Am I further along than I used to be? Without a doubt, I also recognize how much farther there is for me to go. I’m grateful too for how willing my Lord is to work on me as we travel along this awesome journey.