

Living Like You're Born Again

The VISION Newsletter / July 2019

Pastor E. Keith Hassell

John 3:3 (NKJV) “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”

Are you “born again”? What does it mean to be “born again”? Barna Research describes those who are born again as “Individuals who have made a personal commitment to Christ that remains important in their life and who believe they will go to Heaven after they die because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.” A 2017 Gallup Poll found that three quarters of Americans identify with the Christian faith. A 2017 Lifeway Research survey found that 29% of Americans identify as being “born again”. Another 6% are not sure. 59% of Americans who identify as born again attend church weekly. This means that only 17% of “born again” Americans attend weekly worship services. Further research also finds that many who claim to be born again do not hold to a Biblical world view defined by Scripture. Few live any different from the people around them. The question then must be raised, “Why do people who claim to be born again not live like they are?” Another question might be raised, “What does it mean to live like you are born again?”

The “born again” life is not a *reformed* life but a *new* life transformed by the grace of God. I want to set forth seven characteristics found in Colossians 3:1-17 that describe a genuinely “born again” life. The first characteristic is a life identified with Jesus Christ. Through faith we are identified and united with Christ in His death. Thus, the death of our former state as a sinner is a spiritual reality: “*You died...*”¹ Paul said it this way: “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*”²

As believers, not only have we been identified and united with Christ in His death, we have also been identified and united with Him in His resurrection: “*...you were raised with Christ.*”³ This means that we have been raised from spiritual death caused by our sin. We are now “born again” as a new creation: “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*”⁴ Through faith we are also identified and united with His life: “*...Your life is hidden with Christ in God.*”⁵ We are raised to live a new life in Christ. He is now living His life in and through us: “*...it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God...*”⁶ A person who has not placed their faith in Jesus Christ may try to live a reformed life but they do not have a new life. They are not “born again”.

The second characteristic of a person who is born again is a heart that desires to please Christ: “*Seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*”⁷ As believers, we no longer seek to please ourselves. Instead we seek those things that are virtuous and eternal. Our heart is to please Him and not ourselves: “*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*”⁸

A third characteristic of a person who is born again is a mindset fixed on things above: “*Set your mind on things above, not on the things of the earth.*”⁹ A truly born again person begins to think differently about sin and about the things of God: “*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*”⁶ *For to be carnally minded is death,*

¹ Colossians 3:3 (NKJV)

² Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)

³ Colossians 3:1 (NKJV)

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

⁵ Colossians 3:3 (NKJV)

⁶ Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)

⁷ Colossians 3:1 (NKJV)

⁸ 2 Timothy 2:3-4 (NKJV)

⁹ Colossians 3:2 (NKJV)

but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”¹⁰ When we are born again, we are committed to the renewing of our minds to the will of God.

A fourth characteristic of a person who is born again is a life that ceases from its former life in sin: *“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”¹¹ They no longer participate in the sins of their former life. They are committed to living by God’s standards of righteousness. In addition, they are committed to laying aside bad behaviors that displease God: *“But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.”¹² They are committed to laying aside every form of sin in their life.**

The fifth characteristic of a person who is born again is a life that seeks to be like Jesus: *“and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,”¹³ In other words, we are not only to “put off” the “old man” of sin, we are also to “put on” the “new man”, i.e. the nature of the born again man: *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. ¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one body; and be thankful.” To put on the new man is to put on Christ, i.e. to reflect the image and likeness of Jesus.¹⁴**

The sixth characteristic of a born again person is a life saturated and overflowing with the word of God: *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”¹⁵ When we are born again, we will have a hunger and thirst for the word of God. We will desire to read it, study it, memorize it, and hear it preached. The word of God will automatically begin to flow out of our lives in the way we talk to others. The word of God being spoken among us will edify the church and glorify the Lord.*

The seventh characteristic of a person who is born again is a life that promotes the name of Jesus for the glory of God: *“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”¹⁶ The born again person will do Christ’s work in Christ’s name. Through their words, deeds, and thanksgiving they bring glory to God. This is the ultimate aim of the Christian life is to bring glory to God through His Son Jesus Christ.*

Moral reform will not save a person from hell. We must be born again. The new birth is a miracle that only God can perform in the life of a believer. The evidence of the new birth is a transformed life. Are you born again? If your life has never changed, are you truly born again? If not, you can be born again by repenting of your sin and putting your faith in Christ alone to save you. If you claim to be born again, are you living like you are born again? If not, then recommit your life today to living out the new life Christ put inside you.

¹⁰ Romans 8:5–8 (NKJV)

¹¹ Colossians 3:5 (NKJV)

¹² Colossians 3:8–9 (NKJV)

¹³ Colossians 3:10 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Galatians 3:27

¹⁵ Colossians 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Colossians 3:17 (NKJV)