

Children's Moment

January 17, 2016

Title: Don't Get Tangled Up In Sin

Object: Picture of Power Cord Multi-Outlet

Scripture: “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.” (1 John 3:4-5)

What do I have a picture of up on the screen? You are right, it is a power strip. It is able to power and charge several things at one time. I have a power strip like this under my desk at work, but here's what it looks like...(show picture).....right!!

I'm always getting my feet tangled up in all the cords! You know it's funny though ... as long as I keep my feet where they belong I don't get them tangled in the cords. It's only when I don't watch where I'm putting my feet that I get all tangled up. I know the cords are there and I think I'm avoiding them and then all of a sudden one of the cords will be wrapped around my foot! You know, in our Christian walk, sin can be like those cords.

I read these Bible verses last week and they certainly are true of me! “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.” (1 John 3:4-5) Sin lacks the order we find in the Bible. Sin entangles us.

The Bible tells us to avoid everything that keeps us from serving the Lord and avoid the sin that gets us all tangled up. If we fix our eyes on Jesus, we're going to keep our feet where they belong and not get tripped up, but we will stay on the right path. When we're reading our Bibles, worshiping Jesus, serving others and telling people about Jesus, we're “fixing our eyes on Jesus!”

It's when we take our eyes off Jesus that we allow sin to get us all tangled up! Kind of like the cords on that power strip. So this week, let's keep our feet on the right path and fix our eyes on Jesus and throw off that sin that so easily entangles!

Let's pray - Dear Lord, help us to fix our eyes on Jesus so we can stay on the right path and serve you this week. AMEN!

Incarnation and Regeneration

The questions I am asking this morning are: *What is the connection between Jesus' birth and our new birth? What is the relationship between Jesus' incarnation and our regeneration? Or another to say it is why do we need to be born again?* A quick look at our miserable state prior to God's regenerating our soul would be a good answer. Or another answer would be that we could look forward to the good things we will experience by being born again. Of course, it is also good to know we will not experience the heartbreak and punishment for those who are not born again. There are many more answers but these two make our need for rebirth simple and clear.

Abundant Love of God

The great love of God comes to people who are dead in trespasses and sins and who are His enemies, who are not His children, and He makes them alive. Paul explained it this way, “God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.” (Ephesians 2:4-5) **God's bringing the spiritually dead to new spiritual life magnifies the greatness of His love.** What can a dead person do? Absolutely nothing! The spiritually dead may try to be spiritual, but they end up with false religions that experience no true spiritual life. We were spiritually dead and in our deadness were walking in unison with God's archenemy, the devil. This is who we were before God saved us, “You were dead

in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” (Ephesians 2:1-3) Justice is that God saved us, as some would say. However, I say, this is justice; we should perish forever in hell. It is by God’s grace and mercy that any are saved.

But for that very reason our new birth — our being made alive — is a magnificent display of the greatness of the love of God. “... because of the great love with which ~~he~~ God loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ.” (Ephesians 2:4-5) You owe your spiritual life, and all its richness, joy and peace to God and no one else.

This passage in Ephesians is the bridge to today’s text. Let’s look at 1st John chapter 2, verse 28, and think with me how John magnifies the love of God in this passage. Read along with me, ²⁸“And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. ²⁹ If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.” A sign that one is saved is that person practices or lives the Bible and lives as Christ the righteous taught.

Continuing on to chapter 3, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, (Here we see the abundance and greatness of the love of God.) “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called **children** of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, (Beloved means we are loved by God, we are the focus of His affections.) Beloved,

we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." There is a lot packed into these few verses.

Observations from 1 John 3:1-2

I would like to make a few observations to connect this text with the greatness of the love of God in Ephesians 2:4 and my questions: *What is the connection between Jesus' birth and our new birth? What is the relationship between Jesus' incarnation and our regeneration? Why do we need to be born again?*

God's Children

When verse 1 says that we are "called" the children of God, it doesn't mean we were the children of God but not called that, and then God decided to call us His children. No, it means that we were not children of God. We were like the rest of the world referred to in verse 1 – who do not know God. We were dead spiritually and outside His family. Then God called us His children and we became children of God. Notice the words "and so we are." The point is God made us His children. This is the new birth. God made us alive.

The Greatness of the Love of God

This new birth into the family of God here in 1st John is owing to the greatness of the love of God, just like it was written in Ephesians 2:4 & 5. John writes in verse 1, "See (See! Look! John is saying, "This is amazing!" It is almost beyond understanding!) "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be

called children of God.” John was amazed, just like Paul was amazed and just like we should be amazed by this fact; that we who were rebels, enemies of God, the spiritually dead, the unresponsive slaves to sin, God loves us and made us alive, born again, and by His power we are called the children of God. John wrote in an effort that we would feel the wonder of it, because it is the opposite of what we deserve.

Our Final Perfection Secured

This amazing love of God is that He gave us life when we were dead and caused us to be born again and brought us into His family and this secured our final perfection in the presence of God forever. Look at the way verse 2 connects the love of God in our present life as His children, and for the future we long for. “Beloved (those chosen by God to receive His love), Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”

John sees an unbreakable link between what we are now and what we will be when Christ comes. He expresses it with the words “we know.” We understand, we grasp, we are confident of the truth that we are God’s children now and for eternity. “We are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared.” Our conformity to Christ awaits His return. Our glorified bodies await our physical death and our entering into heaven for eternity. So, my beloved, do not be frustrated that you still sin despite your best efforts, for “what we will be has not yet appeared”, it is coming. We know this is true, because Jesus rose from the grave and lives. We know this true because God has made us His children. Only one of two things needs to happen for us to be glorified; either Christ’s return or our

death. Until then “we know” we are sure because “We are God’s children now!”

Necessity of the New Birth

John makes it explicit and obvious that new spiritual birth is a necessary prerequisite for salvation and a guarantee of our future perfection in the presence of Christ forever. Or, to put it the way Jesus said it, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3) Woe, to those who do not believe! But, if you are born again you will see the kingdom of God! You will see Christ and be perfected in the end and spend eternity with joy in His presence.

Why We Must Be Born Again

So here we are with John’s answer to the question, “*Why must we be born again?*” John’s answer is, because if you are not born again you will not look upon Jesus someday and in the twinkling of an eye be changed into His image. Instead, you will remain under the wrath of God. As John wrote clearly, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (John 3:36)

Or, to say it positively, if the immeasurable love of God causes you to be born again and gives you new spiritual life in union with Jesus Christ, you know that when He appears you will be like Him. Because of the new birth, you know you will enter the kingdom of God. This is why we must be born again.

Jesus’ Birth and Our New Birth

Now we are in a position to answer the questions posed at the beginning of our

time this morning; *“What is the connection between Jesus’ birth and our new birth? What is the relationship of Jesus’ incarnation and our regeneration?”* To these I add a few more questions. Could not God have simply caused sinners to be born again and then finally conformed them to His own character in heaven, without sending His Son into the world? Did there need to be an incarnation of the Son of God and a perfect life of obedience and a death on the cross? The answer is, **the new birth and all of its effects, including faith and justification and purification and final conformity to Christ in heaven, would be impossible without the incarnation; the earthly life of Jesus.** Let’s get a glimpse of this from 1 John. I pray that your love for Christ and His coming will increase because of this glimpse.

Consider that the aim of the new birth is to enable us to believe in the incarnate Jesus Christ. If there were no Jesus Christ to believe in, then the new birth would not happen. Look with me at 1st John chapter 5, verse 1, *“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ (that is Jesus is the Messiah, foretold in the Old Testament and He fulfilled every requirement of the prophecies given by God) Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.”* God the Holy Spirit brings spiritual life to the dead souls of people and by this we have faith in Jesus as the Son of God. This is the purpose and reason for our being born again. Believing in Jesus as the Christ is the first sign of the new birth. **Faith is evidence of our new birth.**

I can think of at least one more reason the incarnation is necessary for the new birth. The incarnation of the Son of God is necessary because the life we have through the new birth is a life lived in agreement with the incarnate Christ. Jesus said, *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this*

bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (John 6:51) The life that we live in union with Christ is the life that Jesus obtained for us by the life He lived and the death He died in the flesh.

Look at 1 John 5:10-12 and keep in mind as you read that the Son of God here is the incarnate Son of God, one personality of the Triune Godhead and God is One!

“Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 John 5:10-12)

In other words, the new birth gives us life by bringing us into spiritual connection with Jesus Christ. He is our life. His new life is in us, with all the changes that it brings is the testimony of God that we are His children. This life is the life of the incarnate Son of God. ¹⁴ “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” (John 1:14 & 16)

It is by God’s grace we have a new birth and a new life in Christ.

No Incarnation - No Regeneration

So if there were no incarnation — there would be no regeneration for these two reasons: **1)** If there were no incarnation, there would be no incarnate Jesus Christ to believe in, and that’s the aim of the new birth, and so the new birth would not happen. **2)** If there were no incarnation, there would be no vital union or connection between the incarnate Christ and us. So the new birth would abort because there would be no source of new life.

Christianity is not a kind of spirituality that floats from religion to religion. It is historically rooted in the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Scripture says, “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 John 5:12) Jesus adds to this foundational teaching given to John, “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” (John 5:22-23) Living by faith in Jesus demonstrates to others who Christ is and brings them to a point of decision. Jesus said, “The one who hears you hears me (the living out and sharing the gospel of Christ), and the one who rejects you rejects me (those who reject the gospel reject Jesus), and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” (Luke 10:16) If people reject your testimony, reject the gospel of Christ they reject the only Living God. **If there is no incarnation, there is no possible union with God the Son and God the Father. If there is no incarnation of Jesus as the Christ there is no regeneration and no salvation.** “Jesus said, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’ ” (John 14:6) Jesus was not just a prophet like Daniel, He was not just a exceptional man who brought social change like Gandhi, He was not someone who dedicated His life to the sick and poor like Mother Theresa for limited time; Jesus is God and as God He is the only way for salvation. All other paths led to damnation.

Incarnation and Purification

So without the incarnation of the Son of God as the Messiah, Jesus Christ there would be no regeneration and no saving faith. We may add then briefly, there would be no justification and no purification and without these there is no hope for

true salvation. Look with me at 1st John 3:3-5, “And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. ⁴ Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵ You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.” Both justification and purification are implied here. Purification is explicit. John is saying, if you have experienced the new birth, you will love the day of Christ’s appearing and long for the day when you will be transformed into His perfect likeness. As verse 2 says, “when he appears we shall be like him.” Further, John says in verse 3, “Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” That means everyone who loves the day of Christ’s final purification loves purity now, and hates impurity now, and fights sin now.

Which means that the new birth, which awakens faith and fills us with love for that last great day of purification, produces the fight for purity. So, if there is no regeneration without the incarnation, then also there will be no purification now and no final, Christ-like purity in the end without the incarnate Christ.

Christianity is not a general program for moral transformation that floats from religion to religion. The transformation it calls for is historically rooted in the Person of Jesus Christ. The new birth awakens faith in Jesus as the incarnate One who secures our final purification. **By the power of the Holy Spirit we have an unshakable hope in Christ and our lives are a journey to purify ourselves, as He is pure.**

Incarnation and Justification

This leaves one last great work of Christ to touch on - justification. It is hinted at in 1 John 3:4-5. Right after saying that those who are born again and set their hope in

final perfect of Christlikeness purify themselves, as He is pure, John says something about sin that seems out of the blue. John says in verses 4 and 5, “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.” What’s the point of telling us suddenly, “sin is lawlessness?” Simply, it is that all sins are lawlessness. Then John adds, “he Christ appeared in order to take away sins. I think what John wants us to understand is the great work of Christ in saving us from sin, by faith we are able to overcome sin and Jesus takes away our sins and God remembers them no more, this is the good news. But, I also see John wanting us to understand that sin is serious, sin is law breaking and sin is the state of the fallen world. We don’t just incur defilement that has to be purified, we incur guilt that has to be forgiven and wrath that has to be propitiated, and a falling short of righteousness that needs to be imputed. The work of Christ in taking away the guilt of sin and the wrath of God that is on sin. How could Christ accomplish all this? He did it by His incarnation and life and death and resurrection.

John writes this more clearly latter in his letter, “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10) God sent His Son; we know as God incarnate, to die in our place and so on the cross Christ absorbed the wrath of God and thus become the propitiation for our sins. Sin is serious and as Christians we are not to trivialize it as the world does.

Earlier in his letter John gave us a reason for his writing and for Scripture in our lives, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.” Our society may not know what sin is, but the scriptures are clear as to what is sin. The scriptures give us boundaries and tell how to live in ways that honor God and

keep us from the pain of sin. The verse continues, “But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1) The Holy Spirit that dwells within gives us an understanding that we have sinned; we are grieved by our sin. As the children of God we come before our Lord and Savior confess our sin and are assured of forgiveness and God sees us through Jesus who knew no sin. Jesus is our advocate with God the Father and God sees us as He sees Christ the righteous. This why 1 John chapter 3, verse 5 reads, “in him there is no sin.” Christ is perfect and we are far from perfect. As perfect Jesus bore our sins on the cross and we do not receive God’s righteous judgment for our sins – Jesus paid our debt in full.

Necessity of Christmas

Jesus came from heaven to earth and was born a man. He is God incarnate. He is the God-man. No incarnation, no regeneration. No faith, no justification. No purification, no final glorification. Christmas was not optional. Therefore being rich in mercy, out of the great love with which God loved us, while we were dead in trespasses, He sent His Son into the world to live without sin and die in our place. What a great love the Father has shown to us! What a great obedience and sacrifice the Lord Jesus gave for us! What a great awakening the Spirit has worked in us to bring us to faith and everlasting life! Amen!