

“Born Again Christians” Delivered by E A Terry 04-22-18

2nd Corinthians 5:16 – 21; Romans 8:28 – 39; John 3: 1 – 21; **1st Peter 1: 3 – 9, 13-16, 22-23**
(Sermon)

The Apostle Peter starts this section of scripture by praising Almighty God for several things that God has done for us through the resurrection of our Lord!

You see the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is much more than a memory to be cherished or an anniversary to be celebrated each year.

Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection changed everything.

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus was the fulfillment of God’s eternal plan to save mankind from our sinful nature and to save us from the penalty of our sinful acts.

Jesus defeated sin and death when He rose from the dead.

Jesus came to earth so that we could experience life the way God planned it.

So this morning we will be looking at this new life that is available to us in Jesus Christ and how we should be experiencing this new life while we are on this earth.

In our lesson from John Jesus tells Nicodemus that you must be born again.

To be born again means to be born spiritually.

Then in 1st Peter 1:3 Peter tells us that God has given us new birth through Jesus Christ’s resurrection.

Christians have been born again.

Christians have been born again spiritually.

A new birth means a new beginning; a new relationship with Almighty God, a new way of life, a new way of looking at things, and a new experience.

Try as hard as I can, I cannot remember my physical birth.

My physical birth happened through forces totally beyond my control.

Spiritual birth is like that.

Spiritual birth does not come by our own efforts or through any personal reform.

Spiritual birth is not the result of any new discovery.

Our text clearly tells us, *“God gives us new birth.”*

Spiritual birth comes from the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

President Jimmy Carter received severe ridicule and criticism by the press when he identified himself as a born again Christian.

President Carter was ridiculed because Jimmy had something that all people long for in their life.

Jimmy was a person of hope.

Remember his campaign slogan, *“My name is Jimmy and I am running for President.”*

Jimmy was also a person of joy.

As The President of The United States, Jimmy Carter faced constant opposition from The Congress and from the Washington establishment.

As a result Jimmy was not an effective President.

But this did not change Jimmy’s character nor did this change Jimmy’s outlook on life.

Whether we like Jimmy Carter or not; Jimmy is someone who enjoys hope and joy and Jimmy shares that joy and hope with the people around him.

In the secular world there is a longing for hope and joy.

God created all humans as spiritual beings.

We all have a spiritual itch that needs scratching, we all have a desire for a new life; we all have a desire to be transformed, if you will.

That is why the hymn *“Amazing Grace”* speaks to such a large audience.

“I once was lost but now I’m found... ‘Twas blind but now I see”.

God raising Jesus from the dead was not only a turning point for Jesus but Jesus’ resurrection was also a turning point for all humanity.

Jesus’ resurrection is the window we all are to view life through.

Through the resurrection of Jesus the Christ our text tells us we are born into a living hope.

Notice this is a living hope.

Christians have a living hope and this living hope is eternal life.

This living hope is for the here and now.

This living hope is to be experienced while we are physically here on earth.

In John 10:10 Jesus said; ***“I come that you may have life and have it to the full”.***

In 1st Peter 1: 4 we read that Christians have a spiritual inheritance.

This spiritual inheritance is like an earthly inheritance in that it is a gift.

An inheritance is not earned.

However, this spiritual inheritance is different from an earthly inheritance since our spiritual inheritance is unlimited and our spiritual inheritance can not be taken away.

And a spiritual inheritance can never perish, spoil, or fade.

Our spiritual inheritance is kept in heaven for us.

In Ephesians 1:14 we are told that The Indwelling Holy Spirit is the resident guarantee of our heavenly inheritance.

In 1st Peter 1:5 we read that Christians ***“are shielded by God’s power.”***

We are protected by God’s unlimited power and in our text from Romans we are told that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ Jesus.

In 1st Peter 1: 6 and 7 we see that Christians find meaning and purpose even in our suffering.

In these verses Peter teaches several important principles about trials.

First trials are temporary. *“Though now for a little while...”*

God allows trouble in the believer’s life to strengthen our faith and to test our faith.

This testing is for our benefit so that when we successfully come through a test by trusting in The Lord, we are assured that our faith is genuine.

Our text from Romans also tells us ***“in trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword, we are more than conquerors.”***

And when we are more than conquerors all of our actions bring praise and glory to Almighty God.

We were not created just to get through this life.

We were created to enjoy our life on earth and we were created to be more than conquerors.

Born again Christians are full of joy.

When we love The Lord and believe in Jesus Christ, verse 8 tells us that we will be filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

Joy is not the result of any external circumstances but rather joy comes from within.

In John 16 we read, ***“no one can take our joy away from us.”***

That is because joy only comes from knowing The Lord and believing in all of Jesus' promises.

Born again Christians walk by faith and not by sight.

And faith is being absolutely sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1)

And in 1st Peter 1:9 we read that the goal of our faith is the salvation of our souls.

This brings us full circle back to the ***“new birth into a living hope”*** we read about in verse 3.

Our hope in the resurrection is grounded in the fact that God can raise us to new life here and now.

To live like born again Christians is the foretaste of glory divine we will sing about in our last hymn this morning, *“Blessed Assurance”*.

This new life begins while we are here on earth and this new life never ends.

Just as Jesus was raised from the dead to new life, we too shall be raised to new life.

We proclaim our new birth, our new beginning, and our new way of life by following our Lord's example.

By loving, forgiving, and ministering to the people around us.

We are to continue the ministry that Jesus began while He was on earth; a ministry of reconciling people to God and reconciling people with each other.

As Christians we have been born again.

But the question for each of us this morning is, *“Are we living like born again Christians?”*

Do our family, our friends, and our coworkers see us as new creations?

Has Jesus' resurrection made a difference in the way we think, the way we talk, the way we act, and in the way we react to situations?

Our lesson from 2nd Corinthians tells us ***“if anyone is in Christ they are a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.”***

In all of our lessons we saw that this new life comes as a gift from God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But we must accept God's gift.

We have to claim Jesus as our personal Savior. Spiritual growth is like physical growth.

It is a continuous process.

Just as physical growth is painful at times, spiritual growth is painful at times.

The key to our spiritual growth is for us to allow The Holy Spirit to work in our lives.

Ephesians 4:30 tells us not to grieve The Holy Spirit and Ephesians 5:18 commands us to be filled with The Holy Spirit.

This new birth begins when we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior.

We begin to experience this new life, this new nature as we allow the Holy Spirit to mold us and to make us into the disciples we were created to be.

Just like we need food and exercise to grow physically we need spiritual food and discipline to grow spiritually.

The Apostle Paul admonished the Corinthians not to stay baby Christians but to become mature Christians. (1st Corinthians 3:2)

We all are to constantly seek a more meaningful relationship with The Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

As Christians we all have been given new birth.

If you are a Christian you have been born again spiritually.

And a new birth means a new beginning; a new relationship with Almighty God, a new way of life, a new way of looking at things, and a new experience.

So the question is this; *“do the people around us recognize our new way of life.*

Are we people of love, hope, joy, peace, and forgiveness?

Do we confidently face each circumstance knowing that we are shielded by God?

Do we find meaning and purpose even in our suffering?

Do we truly believe that God causes all things to work for good?

Is our life centered on spiritual things or physical things?

Is our life centered on eternity or is our life centered on the temporary things on this earth?

If you are a Christian you have been born again.

You are a new creation.

The old has gone and the new has come.

We all need to ask ourselves; *“Am I living like a born again Christian each and every day?” AMEN*