

# How Does God Give New Birth?

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Tonight is the conclusion of a study that we've been doing on the doctrine of regeneration, regeneration meaning the idea that God imparts life to a sinner in order to save him. Now that simple statement reflects a supernatural reality that only God can do. Before a man is born again, he is dead in sin. After the Spirit works in his heart, he is alive in Christ Jesus. We have been focusing on the phrase from 1 John that says that we are born of him, we are born of God, and that is the idea of regeneration, new birth has taken place, and last time on Sunday, we saw what the effects of new birth are. How can you know if you have been born again? Well, we saw from various passages in 1 John that there are certain spiritual characteristics that are like after the character of God that start to show forth in the heart and in the life of the man or woman who has been born again, holiness, love, and especially faith in Christ as Savior, faith in Christ as Lord, all these things produced by the Spirit of God and God does this work and man is the recipient of that work.

If I didn't believe in the new birth, I would immediately quit preaching because it does no good to try to tell dead sinners to improve their lives or to behave in a moral way. That is a waste of time. That does no good. That still leaves men in their sins. No, when you preach the Bible, is you preach a supernatural salvation by which men are saved by God through Christ in a supernatural way that cannot be done by the power of man alone. That's why Scripture describes it in supernatural terms, that being born again can be described as a new birth, a new creation, a spiritual resurrection. Regeneration, the impartation of new life has taken place, and so to be saved, to be born again is something magnificent, it is from a realm outside of earth coming down and bearing fruit in the soul of a man, and so that a man who was once hostile to God, hard of heart, dead in sin, blinded by Satan, now is alive to Christ, has a heart of flesh that is responsive to the things of God, and whereas before they were dead in sin, now they are alive in Christ, all of these things being aspects of the biblical doctrine of regeneration. So this is part of a crash course that we are giving in Christian discipleship to understand where it is that your life in Christ came from. This is not something that you did to yourself, this is something that God did to you for the person who has genuinely been born again. Well, it leaves a question. This is the last in these series of messages. It leaves a question that needs to be answered and the question is this: how does God do this? How does God cause a man to be born again? How does he accomplish the new birth? And I want to

give you a couple of points to discuss this, to consider this, and then we'll consider some points of application for ministry at the end of the time.

There is an unknown element as we study Scripture, and yet there is a very clear element to answer these questions. First of all, how does God do it? Well, first of all, God does this in a mysterious way. God works the new birth mysteriously by which we mean this, the act of regeneration is beyond our final comprehension. It is beyond our final comprehension. We cannot know it fully. We cannot trace it completely and Jesus made this abundantly clear in the Gospel of John 3. I invite you to turn there with me. John 3:8 where Jesus said this in his words to Nicodemus, he said, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." What Jesus says is that the new birth is beyond the capacity of man to give it a final analysis, to say this is how exactly it happened. You don't know where the work of God started in your life, you don't know where it will end up, you can only say that, "I see the effects of it in my life," but you're not able to describe exactly how God did it.

Now I want to talk about this from a couple of different perspectives. First in terms of the metaphor that Jesus uses with regard to the wind. I had a friend when we lived in California who was a meteorologist and he had given his life, he considered himself a weather nerd, and God gave this nerd, I'm using his term, gave this nerd the opportunity to live the life and to pursue a career in that which he really loved to study which was the weather, and we talked about this and he told me this, he said meteorologists today are able to analyze the wind certainly more than men could in the first century when Jesus said this, he said but the wind is still a mystery even to the best of meteorologists today. Winds gust up and they settle down. There are weather observation stations that are windy for no apparent reason whatsoever and it is a mystery that they cannot explain even for those who have devoted their entire careers to studying weather phenomenon. Even today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is an element of mystery to the wind that exceeds and transcends the best minds that apply their abilities to be able to study it.

Now in the same way for those of us that study the works of God as he has revealed them in the Scripture, God's work of regeneration is beyond our final comprehension and you can see this in a variety of ways. One of the ways that you can see it is this. You could have a group of people like you fine folks that are gathered here today, have a mixture of unbelievers and believers in it, and the preacher preaches a message, includes a Gospel presentation and makes an appeal for a man to repent and believe, and for one person sitting there, that message has power on them, they are convicted of sin and they cry out to Christ to save them because they are so moved by what they have heard they must respond, there is an urgency and a compulsion in their heart, "I have to respond. I have to come to Christ right now in response to what I've heard." And he turns and he talks to the person who was next to him after the service, "Wasn't that a magnificent powerful sermon?" And the person looks at him and says, "What are you talking about? I fell asleep. That was the most boring thing that I have ever heard." Well, there are distinctions in the way that God brings his word with power to one heart under a particular message and not to another. Why is it that one person finds a particular

message to be so powerful in their hearts and another can just pass it by and go on in life and check his phone when the service is done as if nothing had happened in the preceding hour? Well, there's an element of mystery to that, isn't it? It's the same words, it's the same speaker, it's the same room, and yet one man responds and another man is left cold. Why is that? It's because there is an element of mystery to the work of God where he applies it with power to one heart and the other man is passed by by the movement of the wind, so to speak.

There is no way, no genuine way, that a preacher can predict whether someone will be converted under a particular message. A preacher does not have the power to force that to happen, not really. We're talking about real regeneration, the real miracle of new birth. We're talking about the real work of God inside a human heart, not that response which is outward, superficial, manipulated by lighting and music and salesman techniques, we're just talking about the real thing, not that which can be artificially induced, and the real thing is something that is beyond our power to produce. This humbles us. We cannot predict how God will use any given message or any given evangelistic presentation by a man to his friend, we can only be faithful, we can only do these things and see the effects after God has done the work. We can't say where it will happen. We can't say when it will happen. But when the wind blows, you see the leaves rustling in the tree, when God saves a man genuinely, you see the effects in his life even though that you could not trace it beforehand.

One hymnwriter put it this way and we sing this hymn here at Truth Community Church, he says, "I know not how this saving faith to me He did impart, nor how believing in His word wrought peace within my heart. I know not how the Spirit moves convincing men of sin, revealing Jesus through the word creating faith in Him." I don't know these things. I can't explain how it happens inside the recesses of a man's heart. But the chorus goes on to say, "But I know whom I've believed and I'm persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." I don't know how the Spirit does this but I know that he's done it in my heart, I know that I believe, and the hymn is giving expression to that.

You could probably think about this, those of you that are genuine Christians looking back over your own spiritual history, you could look back and see this in your own life. I know I certainly can. Isn't it true that in your unconverted days there were times where people were sharing the Gospel with you and you did not respond to it? People came to you and proclaimed Christ to you and you rejected it? You didn't care, it was foolishness to you? You mocked them? You criticized them? You walked away from them? And you were just dead to them in the stony cold nature of your unconverted heart, but then one time there was a time in your life where suddenly it came to you with power. You heard a man talking and explaining the Gospel maybe to someone else and the light bulb started going on to you and you said, "This is true of me. I'm separated from God. I need Christ. I need a Savior or I will be doomed eternally." And those things and it's not that anything new was being said to you that you hadn't heard before, showing that it wasn't simply a matter of intellectual comprehension for you, rather the prior times the word was coming to you in an external way and yet the Spirit had not yet chosen to apply it to your heart

with power, and then sometimes in a surprising context, sometimes with an inarticulate man explaining the word to you, the light goes on, you understand and there is an urgency and a compulsion by which you needed to come to Christ.

Beloved, that is an example from your own experience of the reality of the mystery of regeneration in the human heart. Why was it that it didn't take? Why was it that you didn't understand beforehand? Why did God not choose to do it earlier in your life and then he did it later on? Who can explain these things? We can't ultimately trace them. You cannot ultimately trace the exact words that had that impact upon you. You can't ultimately recreate the chain of thoughts that were taking place when you went from not understanding to getting it. For some of us, it was a clear in a moment change, others it happened over a course of time. How God changes our heart is a mystery and we cannot predict in advance when it will take place but we see the effects of it.

Now let me just make a point of application. Part of the reason that we're talking about regeneration here, doing this series in the broader context of regeneration and providence and church life, this has a very practical effect for the way that people should approach their commitment to the local church and being under the preaching of the word of God. We don't know when God will actually move with power to accomplish this work in someone's heart and if you are not a Christian, there's no way to know, you know, whether you'll have another opportunity to hear the Gospel or not, and one of the things that this does because we don't know, because this is humbling, it creates an environment in which the most important thing that we could do in a ministry of the word of God is simply to be faithful to it. Because we don't know when God will work and move with power maybe in the hearts of many, maybe in the hearts of one, because we don't know, then it is incumbent upon us to be gathered together whenever the word of God is opened to hear it so that we are there when it happens and so that the church gathers together and when we come together because we're going to see God does this through his word, when we come together, it is just so vitally important that we are opening the word, explaining the word, talking about the word, calling people to faith and repentance, elevating Christ because we never know when God is going to move with power to accomplish the work of regeneration in the hearts of those that hear.

So God works mysteriously in the work of regeneration but that leads us to a second point. It leads us to a second point. To say that God works mysteriously, to say that he works in a way that goes beyond human understanding or the predictive ability of even the most spiritual of men, does not mean that it happens blindly. It does not mean that God just arbitrarily zaps someone who's walking down the street who's never heard the Gospel and then all of a sudden, boom, he's born again. It doesn't work that way. That is not how God works. The mystery of regeneration occurs in a context. God does not arbitrarily zap someone to new life, it occurs in a context that Scripture makes very very clear, which brings us to our second point this evening and it's this, is that God works through his word. God works through his word. God uses the Scripture. God uses the text of the Bible to communicate to bring new life as his Spirit applies his word to the heart that hears.

Beloved, this is fundamental. This is simple. This is not difficult to understand. God uses his word to bring about the new birth and I have a number of passage that I want to take you to. You're in the Gospel of John, turn to John 5:24, if you will. John 5:24. Jesus said in John 5:24, he says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." The new birth, passing out of death into life and you trace it back and when does that occur? It occurs when a man believes in Christ and that life is given to him and he passes out of death into salvation. Well, trace it back, kind of reverse engineering the passage, where is it, what is the context in which that belief occurs? Jesus says, "It's he who hears My word." And so what Christ is saying here is that his words are eternal life, his words have the inherent power of eternal life, and in order to receive eternal life, you must somehow hear his word and believe in response to it. You hear his word, you believe, and you find eternal life, the point being is that the new birth occurs in the context of the word being brought to the human heart. Maybe it's through vocal formal preaching, maybe it's through private personal evangelism, maybe it's being exposed to the word through the written page or the audio file or whatever it may be, but somehow, somehow the word is brought to the heart and the Spirit of God uses that to create new life and the person believes and is saved.

Look at Romans 1 beginning in verse 15. The Apostle Paul says, "I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Paul says, "I want to preach the Gospel to you because in the proclamation of the Gospel, the power of God is operative to everyone who believes in response to it." There is a power, a spiritual power enabled, produced by the Holy Spirit as the Gospel is preached and it works upon human hearts and creates that faith that people exercise to believe in Christ for their eternal salvation. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It occurs in the context of the word.

We could go on to 1 Corinthians, if you continue turning in your New Testaments. 1 Corinthians 1 beginning in verse 18, "the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Some people hear the Gospel and it's foolishness to them. Some hear and the power of God is operative upon them. "For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.'" Verse 21, "in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, yet God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." The message is preached, God works through it, and men believe unto salvation. So Paul says, "That's why I preach the Gospel. That's why I do what I do." He says, "Jews ask for signs." The Jews wanted miraculous powers to be displayed to supposedly confirm what was being preached. Paul says, "I don't give signs like that. Greeks are searching for wisdom," they want human rhetoric, Jews want signs from heaven, Paul says, here's what I do, "I preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." The Gospel coming with power when the word is preached, in other words.

So he goes on to say in chapter 2, verse 2, "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." Paul says, "I preached the Gospel to you in the power of the Holy Spirit. I didn't try to do it in human eloquence, in fact, I was with you in much human weakness, but I simply declared to you the truth of God and as I did the Spirit of God was at work in me as I preached and in your hearts as you heard." And that dynamic is the power of God when the Spirit of God works in a human heart, that is the dynamic that God uses to save those who believe. The Spirit of God uses the word of God proclaimed through the man or woman of God to the heart of a sinner, and God uses that to create new life where none had existed, God uses that to create belief where unbelief had existed, and men believe and are saved and their transformed lives give testimony to the reality that, so to speak, using the metaphor of Jesus, the wind of God has blown in their lives and now the effects are being seen as a result, the point here being God works through his word to accomplish his purpose of salvation in those who believe.

2 Timothy 3:14, Paul tells Timothy to "continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them," then in verse 15, "that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The sacred writings, the Scriptures, have the ability to give you the understanding which leads to salvation which is received through faith in Jesus Christ.

Psalms 19 is a good Old Testament parallel to look at, a good Old Testament passage. Psalm 19:7 says, "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes." The word of God has the power to open eyes so that men may believe and be saved and their souls thoroughly restored, and as a result of this, beloved, we see that God uses his word, not human cleverness, to save sinners.

Now you all know this by now, those of you that have been long time attenders of Truth Community Church, there is a reason why we put the word of God literally in the center of the auditorium, there's a reason why the pulpit is placed in the center, there is a reason why the word of God is central when we gather together and we focus on it and other things are secondary by comparison, at least in terms of the amount of time that we spend on them. It is because we believe and we understand that God works in human hearts through the word of God. If ever a sinner is going to come into this room and be saved, it will be because God used his word with power in their hearts to do a work which was beyond the ability of any one of us to do on our own. We cannot joke people into the kingdom of heaven. We can't sing them into the kingdom of heaven. We can't program them into the kingdom of heaven. God unleashes his power through the opening of his word and that's why we do it. We do it for the sake of sinners who would come in. We realize also that it is through his truth that he sanctifies believers like you and me. It is

through the word of God working in our hearts that our minds are transformed and we are increasingly conformed to the image of Christ. It is through the power of God working through his word in the hearts of unconverted men that faith is created and that's why we focus on the word.

That's why, beloved. You see, we believe at Truth Community Church that that's the most important thing that we could do. We believe that that is the way that the eternal kingdom of God is advanced and spiritual purposes are achieved. We don't believe that there's any power in a so-called social gospel that just rehearses racial wrongs from the past of generations gone by and brings them forward and causes them to be a point of division within the church today. We think that is a waste of time and a distortion of the Gospel to do that. We believe in the unfolding of the word of God, the preaching of the word of God, and in that context appealing to men and women to respond by faith and put their faith in Christ. We realize that the world has no interest in this. We realize that we're not going to attract a big crowd doing this. We don't care about that. That's not important to us because we realize that the purposes of God are not going to be advanced through the means that the world finds attractive or entertaining.

When we started Truth Community Church, many of you weren't here when we were saying these things, in the earliest days of Truth Community Church and people were saying, "What's gonna happen in this church? What's the ministry going to be like?" And my answer was this, this was the full extent of my answer, you could probably find it on a transcript someplace, I said, "We're gonna open this Bible, teach it, and see what happens," believing in and that's, that's a simple simplistic way of saying we believe in the sufficiency and the power of Scripture and we'll build our ministry on it come what may. And I thank God that so many of you are here and that's exactly what you want and you share in that same goal and philosophy, you've seen the word of God at work in your own heart and that's what you want. Well, that's what we do here at Truth Community Church.

So what I want you to see, then, is this, is that believing this, believing that God works uniquely through his word to accomplish his work of regeneration, beloved, that has a massive and a powerful impact on what your philosophy of ministry is. If you believe that, then the word of God becomes central as a necessary consequence of it. That's why you preach, that's why we preach, that's why we focus on the word, is because we believe that to be true. God works the work of new birth through his word and we believe that it doesn't do a man any good if we improve his economic status, if we solve his earthly problems and yet leave him in an unconverted state. We believe that and so we do what we do.

And for those of you that are newer to our church, welcome, this is what we're about, and if it's what you're about, then we're glad you're with us. If it's not what you're about, you'll probably get tired of us quickly and that's okay.

God uses his word to save sinners. Look at the book of James, just after the book of Hebrews, James 1, beginning in verse 18, "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth

by the word of truth," God brought you to Christ by the word of truth, "so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures." Verse 21, because God uses his word in the hearts of people, we respond in this way, "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." God works through his word to accomplish the act of salvation, to accomplish the new birth, and therefore as we are receiving the word, we set aside sin, we turn away from sin and we receive that word which has that power to do that work in the hearts of those who hear and believe. God works through his word.

And one more passage in 1 Peter, the next book over from James. 1 Peter in verse 23 says, "you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." You have been born again through the work of the word of God in your hearts. Verse 24, "For, 'All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass, the grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever.' And this is the word which was preached to you." The word of God did that work in your heart as the Spirit of God applied it with power to you.

So the work of God, the new birth is mysterious in the sense that we can't trace or predict it ahead of time, we know that he works through his word, and that makes the word central and crucial and vital to everything that would take place in Christian ministry. And what does that mean for us, then? Thirdly, what is the call to application here? What do we do with this? Let's just look at a few brief points here.

First of all from a philosophy of ministry standpoint, how does this apply? It means that we must preach the word. We must preach the word. Go back to 2 Timothy and if you want another sense of perspective of understanding of why we do what we do at Truth Community Church, why I do what I do, well, I want to tell you, it's because I am filled with fear as I read chapter 4, verse 1. We are under a solemn obligation from God to honor his word so that what the world would want us to do is utterly irrelevant by comparison. The Apostle Paul in some of the final words that came from his pen before his execution in 2 Timothy 4:1 says, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom," he says, "Timothy, I am placing the most sober charge upon your soul, as God is witness to the words that I am writing to you in the name of Christ Jesus and in light of future judgment and his appearing in his kingdom, Timothy, this is the charge that I give to you: preach the word," preach the word, "be ready in season and out of season," when people want to hear it and when people don't, you preach the word, you "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." Timothy, the central thing for you to understand is that the word must be preached and you must do it. If you are in ministry, this is your call and responsibility to preach the word.

Now what was true of the man who was to preach the word, the man responsible for spiritual leadership, we see that that is the responsibility for the church itself and he says in verse 3, and he gives a warning that is fitting no doubt through many epics of human history, it's certainly fitting for the day and age in which we live both inside the church and outside it, he says, "Timothy, the time will come when they will not endure sound

doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires," and if you follow the command with the sense of the reason for it, preach the word because the time is coming when men won't endure sound doctrine. He says, "Therefore, Timothy, because this is what it's going to be like, your response is not to go with the crowd, not to be carried away by the waves of doctrine, not to chase after men who want nothing to do with sound doctrine. Even if they go away, you stay where you are and you preach the word. Even as you watch them accumulating other teachers for their own desires, Timothy, you preach the word." He says, in verse 4, "They'll turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."

You know, it's the nature of ministry, it's the nature of ministry that people will come and people go. People move away for legitimate reasons, job transfer, relocation, retirement, people come, people go, we get that. Sometimes people come and go for other reasons that, you know, may not be the most noble or legitimate but whatever. People get to make their own choices, right? And I'm just standing alone here telling you my perspective on this and what my perspective on ministry is in light of that dynamic, particularly in light of this passage in Scripture where Paul says, "I solemnly charge you," saying it to Timothy, saying it to those in spiritual leadership today, "preach the word, preach the word, preach the word." My perspective on it is this, it might sound a little bit cold to you but I don't mean it to be cold, I just want you to see where this philosophy of ministry takes you and where it takes a church, even. I look at it this way: people come, people go, I stay and I preach the word. That's the way it works. I can't control what people do in response to it. That's between them and God. But when it comes to what the direction of Truth Community Church is, as long as I am the pastor here and the existing elder board is in place and like-minded men come later, it's gonna be that our focus is preaching the word. That is not subject to negotiation and God helping us, that is not subject to change. That will only change when 2 Timothy 4 changes. If that doesn't change, we're not changing, God helping us, God have mercy on us, but what I want you to see is this has consequences for the way that you do ministry in a local church. So we must preach the word as a result of these things.

Look at Romans 10. You see, beloved, there's just a sense in which a Bible-believing church should have a preeminent sense of vertical responsibility before God that this is what our responsibility is to do, and the way that people respond to it, the way that people come and go, does not alter that commitment. This is vital. This is everything. You don't change your philosophy of ministry to chase after people to bring them back. You don't change your philosophy of ministry to get people who really aren't interested in Christ and the Gospel to get them into the walls of the room. You don't do that. You can't because the command is, "Preach the word. Go and make disciples," Jesus said in Matthew 28. Go and make disciples. How are we to do that? "Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." Teaching central at the concept of making disciples, of evangelism. At the core of what Christ told his people to do, this is central, this is vital, this is everything and the philosophy of the ministry of the local church and the ebbs and flows of the way that people receive and respond to it, do not alter the command that is placed upon the people of God to carry out the proclamation of the word of God. That is what gives stability, long term stability to the life of a church as things come and go, as

situations change and endure. This is the bedrock upon which everything else is built and it flows out in part from an understanding of how God works the new birth.

Romans 10:14, "How then," and the point here is this, what do we do in response to the way that God accomplishes the new birth? We preach the word. Romans 10:14, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!' However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'" The sum of it all is this, "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." How is it that people come to Christ in saving faith? It's because the word of Christ is proclaimed to them and that's our responsibility.

So we preach the word and when we do that, as we do that, somehow God opens the hearts of sinners to respond. You'll remember Lydia in Acts 16:14, it says that she was listening as Paul was preaching and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. That's what we're talking about. Paul is speaking the truth, he's proclaiming the Gospel, and Lydia is hearing as it occurs. In the process of that, God supernaturally worked in her heart, opened it so that she was able to receive it and to believe and to be saved. And that's why we preach the word.

Now secondly, another aspect of application to this. What does the way that God accomplishes the new birth mean? It means, first of all, that we must preach the word, but secondly it also means this and this is a very important balance and important truth to have side-by-side with everything that we've said in the prior three messages, and it's this, is that sinners must repent and believe in Christ. Sinners must repent and believe in Christ. You see, Scripture commands unbelieving people to respond to the Gospel when it is preached to them. They are not given an alternative, there is a command that comes to them. Jesus said in Mark 1:15, "Repent and believe in the gospel." And so as we are proclaiming the word of God to sinners, as we preach the Gospel to them, Christ crucified, Christ buried, Christ risen again for sinners, Christ the Savior of sinners, Christ whose shed blood washes away sin, Christ whose righteousness is sufficient to reconcile you to God, as we declare those truths the command comes and says, "You are to repent and believe those things. You are to repent of sin, to turn from your sin and your godlessness, your sin and your rebellion, and you are to believe in Christ. You are to receive Him, submit to Him, rest in Him, cast your entire eternal lot entirely on Christ and trust nothing in yourself. Deny yourself, deny your self-righteousness and believe in Christ alone for your salvation and that is the responsibility of sinners to do."

The doctrine of regeneration does not deny their responsibility to do that, it simply says that the initiating power for that response must come from God because otherwise the sinner will suppress the truth, Romans 1; otherwise the sinner will prefer his evil deeds to coming to the truth, John 3. And so the Gospel comes, the command, "Repent and believe," comes and when God is working in his heart, he attends that, he brings the

power of his Spirit to bear upon the heart and works in that heart in a way that the heart willingly repents and believes in response.

Can I remind you of something precious along those lines? It's this, is that in that Gospel appeal, in that proclamation of Christ, God is in love and in mercy promising forgiveness of sin, promising eternal life to the one who comes to Christ. There is this promise of God that attends everything that we do and he graciously entreats sinners to believe and to accept and to rest upon his promise to save them as the Gospel is presented to them.

Look at Isaiah 55, and perhaps for you hearing this message, the very words of promise and invitation would be that which God would use to open your heart that you would finally come to Christ after even years of resisting him. Isaiah 55:6 says, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD." There's this call, this promise, this command, "Come to the LORD. Come to Christ. Come out of the world. Come out of your sin and come to this person that we proclaim to you." And there's a promise, an eternal, sure, undeniable, unbreakable promise on the part of God to the one who will come to him, it says, "He will have compassion on him, Come to our God, For He will abundantly pardon." The one who comes to Christ finds that God has compassion on him, pardons him, cleanses him, changes him, adopts him into his family and makes him his own forevermore. That's the promise of God in this word of God that we proclaim.

So there is every reason for a sinner to do this. There is the authority of God expressed in the command of God, "Repent and believe in the Gospel," and in the same breath and in the same message, it is attended with a loving, generous, gracious, patient, merciful promise from God that says, "As you come, I promise you that I will pardon your sins." God says in effect, "I promise you that I will have compassion on you, that all of your broken life and miserable sinful existence, I will turn it around, I will change it, I will make you new. I will forgive all of your sins never to remind you of them ever again."

In John 6, Jesus stated these promises in the first person, he said, "I am the bread of life," John 6:35, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." Promise, the promise that attends the proclamation of the Gospel, the promise that God in part uses to impart new life to a sinner. Verse 40, "this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

You know, there is no acceptable reason for any sinner anywhere to reject that call of God, is there? Christ is presented to them as an all-sufficient Savior, willing to save them, able to save them, calling them, beckoning them, promising them new life, promising them pardon, promising them an eternal life that will survive judgment on the last day. There's no reason for anyone to reject that and what a sad state of culpability must come upon the one who does. My friend, you need to come to Christ. If you don't know him, you need to come to Christ and you need to come today as this gracious offer and command from God falls upon your ears.

Well finally in terms of application, we've said in the way of application that we must preach the word, sinners must repent and believe in Christ, finally we simply say this: in that all of this we must depend on God's Spirit. We must depend on God's Spirit. You and I cannot guarantee anyone salvation. When you go out to evangelize, when our door-to-door team goes out, they cannot compel a response that guarantees one comes to Christ. The Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, the blessed third person of the Trinity must bless our evangelism, must bless our preaching if people are going to come to Christ. Even Paul himself depended on the Spirit in his ministry. The great apostle with all of his giftedness, having been a direct student of Christ himself, we find him saying in Romans 10 as he thinks about his Jewish unconverted friends, he says, "My prayer to God for them is for their salvation." He is praying for God to save them because he realizes that he cannot do it on his own.

So the doctrine of regeneration means that we preach the word and we depend upon the Spirit as we do. God gives new birth. It is a miracle that only he can do and he does it through his word. We have been on the receiving end of that work, those of us that are in Christ. We look back and we see the fruits and effects of it, whereas we were dead in sin now we're somehow, some way, to one degree or another a live, desiring, loving holiness, loving the love of Christians, consciously resting our faith in Christ. And as his people that have been born again, we preach the word and we depend on the Spirit as we do.

May God bless you as you share Christ. May God use his Spirit through the ministry of Truth Community Church and everyone that's a member here, to be an instrument used like this to do the miraculous work of the new birth.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we pray that indeed You would use us to bring sinners to Christ. We pray that You would manifest Your power to accomplish the new birth through our witnessing, through the pulpit of this church, through wherever the word goes, through wherever Your people go. Father, in a powerful, in a fresh way we ask You yet again to use us like this, O God. We are grateful for the work that You've done in our hearts. We're grateful for the work that You've done through us individually and corporately. We're grateful for all of it, Father, but, O God, the work is not done. O God, it's not like there aren't sinners still outside the kingdom. God, it's not like there are loved ones in our own families that are dead in trespasses and sin and hostile to everything that we've said here tonight. And God, it's not like we're ever going to have the power to do anything on that on our own and so we commend our feeble words and our feeble efforts and even our feeble desires in these things, Father, to You, depending upon Your Holy Spirit to take the weakness of our ability and our effort and use it powerfully in the hearts of men to come to Christ so that they would be saved, so that they would have eternal life, and so that preeminently You, O God, would receive all of the glory. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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