

Becoming a Child of God

by Derek Melton

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the grace of God in becoming a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 1:06:04

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 1:10-13, James 1:17, Revelation 22:18-19

Topics: "Children Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the parable of the sower and the four types of soil. He emphasizes that only the good ground represents true conversion, where the person not only hears the word of God but also understands it. The preacher highlights the importance of understanding and producing fruit in one's faith. He also mentions the need for discipline and focus in studying the scriptures. The sermon concludes with a focus on becoming a child of God through grace, referencing Spurgeon's book 'All of Grace.'

Transcript

Next, and we're going to just start in verse 1. In the beginning was the Word, and I want you to note that, and we talked about the supremacy of Jesus Christ from eternity. And again, this morning we will do a little bit of a recap about certain things. But, you know, there's a whole movement out there that radically promotes the idea that Jesus Christ became the Son.

And for those of you that know Scripture, know that that is a fallacy. It's heresy. Jesus Christ never became the Son.

He's always been the Son. He might have became flesh, and in fact he did, John 1, 14, but he never became the Son. He was the Son in the beginning.

In the beginning was the Word. In fact, synonymous term would be Son. In the beginning was the Son.

The Son was with God, and the Son was God, because Jesus Christ is the Word of God. Amen? And so, verse 2 says, The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

Just a week or two ago, a brother in Christ came into my office and was talking about a sermon that he heard, talking about the things that made John great. That John didn't get into fashion design clothes, that he didn't eat delicate, prevailing foods, and that he didn't run around with all the other people that were doing the wrong kind of thing, and that's what made John great. I said, Brother, I hate to break the news to you, but that sermon's wrong.

That's not what made John great. What made John great was that he was sent by God. And because he was sent from God and he was of God, those things were just in sync with his character.

Those things didn't make him great. He was a great man because he was a godly man. He was sent from God.

God had, even from the womb, filled him with the Spirit of God. Verse 7 says, The same came forth, or came for a witness to bear witness of the light that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light, that was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. And we talked for a week about knowing Christ, and that's where we got that term that he came into the world, that he himself had made as creator, and the world didn't know him. We talked about our relation to Christ, and the imperativeness of our knowing him.

He came into his own, and his own received him not, and there we camped out for a week, and I believe we gave a biblically accurate dissertation about what it means to receive Jesus Christ, albeit we're living in a generation that grossly misinterprets that, I believe. And then it says, But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. And so we camped out for a week, and talked about what it means to believe on the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And we walked through the scriptures, and talked about the authority, and the power that is in his name, and that we throw, or cast ourselves into his arms, and call for his mercy, knowing that we are a sinful people, and that we are in need of a Savior. But in verse 13 it says, Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. So today what we're going to do is not really go back, and to recap what we've already talked about.

Those tapes or CDs are available for free for you. I think it's imperative, I think, that three of the most important sermons that have been preached from this pulpit, by me anyway, in the last sum of time, have been those three sermons on knowing, and receiving, and believing on the name of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Because they are truly the pinnacle of the whole synopsis of the Bible.

It truly is. And so today we're going to continue in that. We're going to talk about becoming a child of God.

How do we become a child of God? And so the title this morning is Becoming a Child of God. And then I put a hyphen there, and it's all of grace. It's all of grace.

And if you've not read Spurgeon's little book called All of Grace, it's one of his best books. I think it's simple. It's written for a child to be able to read and to understand.

It's a great work. It's an epic work, actually, even though it's small. It's one of Spurgeon's best works.

And it's just a small book, and it'll only take you a day to read it, or less. But I encourage you to do so. Well, let's go to God and ask God to help us today and to bless this message and to give us understanding.

And we'll get into that word in just a moment, understanding and the need of the hour for it. Well, Father, humbly, we come to the throne of grace for we have a great need in this hour. And it's the need of understanding.

It's the need of understanding. So, Lord, you said that we should come to you and that you would supply it to us. Lord, that you give it giver of all good gifts.

They all come down from the father of lights in whom there's no variableness nor shadow with turning. So, Lord, we come to you, Lord, boldly, but humbly kneeling at the throne of grace, beseeching you for understanding of these great themes, these truths, these revelations that you have given to us, given to us and the holy writ of God in the sacred scriptures. Father, I pray that we would not fall prey to allow our minds and thoughts to go adrift this morning, but Lord, that we would discipline by the grace that you have supplied to us through your son, Jesus Christ, to keep our minds, that they would be fixed, that they would be disciplined.

Lord God, that they would be challenged, Lord, by a sense of self-discipline that you give us ability through the new birth to be able to do. Lord, that we would not go aloof. Lord, that we would not allow the fiery darts of Satan to come and to leave them, our thoughts, and thereby leaving the whole lump.

Lord God, give us this day, our daily bread, our daily bread, in the name and for the glory of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And the people of God said, Amen. And so I want to go back to the text, because these, I believe, are some of the most glorious scriptures in all of the Bible.

It says, He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, namely the Jews, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become sons of God, even to them who believed on His name, which were born.

Listen to the terms. To become. He gave them power to become, which were born.

And these are all God terms. They're all indicative of a work of God. They're all indicative of the grace of God.

All indicative of a miracle of God, which is the new birth. It's not a work of man. It's the work of God.

It's salvation. It's redemption. It's a birthing, as it will.

It's a becoming, as it is. And we're going to talk about these terms. These, I believe, are some of the most glorious passages in the whole sum of the Bible.

These thoughts that we give to them, that we meditate upon regarding them. Some of the most glorious thoughts, the most glorious meditations that we can give in regard, regarding the Scriptures. It's the grand theme of the Bible.

About becoming a child of God. The new birth. And I think it's a regrettable thing that these thoughts and truths have been, I think, misunderstood.

Radically misunderstood in our generation. Radically mistaught in our generation. And grossly misinterpreted.

And so, our modern era, I believe, has a... Stacey and I were talking about this yesterday. We was on our way to a family Christmas dinner. About just some of the things I was going to mention today from the pulpit.

These are truths that 100 years ago that children in Sunday school were quite familiar with. But today, people that have been living in Christianity for 60 years are absolutely lacking regarding these truths that are so foreign to them. And we're going to go into these things, I hope, this morning, by the grace of God.

And to spend some time wrestling these out in our minds. Wrestling them out in our minds. Do you realize that the greatest themes of the Bible are the greatest targets for Satan's arrows? And it's not really the themes themselves, but the minds and the understanding of the people.

Satan wants to come and introduce to you a little bit of leaven regarding the greatest themes and truths in the Bible. He wants them to be perverted in your understanding because it's the accurate and precise understanding of these enormous themes of the Bible. The contemplation of them, the meditation upon them, the participation in them.

That's the most important thing in all life. Satan wants to come and to deceive and to leaven, to taint these important and imperative themes that are the major themes of the Bible. Have you read through your Bible and recognized that there are major themes and then there are sub-themes that support major themes? And as you become a good student of the Word of God, and I pray as after the first of the year we're going to be launching a new class in the West Wing in our Sunday School class on how you're supposed to study your Bible.

And we're going to be using some of Dr. Sproul's literature in that regard. But we're going to teach by the grace of God. We're going to teach the people of God in this family of faith that will get out of bed and come to Sunday School.

We're going to teach you how to interpret Scripture. And how to study Scripture. And so we're looking forward to that, about knowing Scripture and how to interpret and study Scripture.

And so I think that will be greatly beneficial. And so, again, once again, I want to make mention that it's really not the themes of the Bible that Satan bends his bow toward. But it's the minds of the people.

And that's where he taints these tremendous truths of the Word of God. And he begins to leaven our understanding of these great truths. And thereby it leavens the whole lump.

Listen, if Satan could come in and introduce a lie in these most colossal and most important truths, he's really got you. And that's how he works. He works subtly.

He works religiously. He doesn't come as a devil from hell. He comes with angel's wings, flapping and sweet breath, as it might be.

Not devil breath. He doesn't come to you with green, gross slime dripping from his fangs. He comes to you with sweet breath.

He comes to you with things that make you feel good about yourself. He comes to you with Oprahisms. You all know what an Oprahism is? It's the theology of Oprah Winfrey.

And that's how he comes. But you know what? We see in the parable of the seed and the sower, Matthew chapter 13, there are those that produce fruit. And this is speaking of those who have been regenerated by the power of God.

Those that have been born again. Those that have been born anew. And they produce fruit.

Beloved, every man or woman that's been born of God will produce fruit. In fact, we see in Matthew chapter 7 that those that do not, or fail to so do, are gathered together as sticks. They're bundled up and they're cast into the fire where they're burned.

But we see here that there is four types of soil. One of which is indicative of a new birth. Three of which is indicative of a false conversion.

And the one that we see that is good ground, what makes them good ground? The word of God says this in verse 23 of Matthew 13. He that receiveth the seed in the good ground is he that heareth the word. It's these colossal truths.

Listen to this. Listen to what it says. It's he that heareth the word and understandeth it.

He produces fruit because he's hearing. And not just hearing. There's an understanding that accompanies it.

So what does Satan want to do? He wants to throw a wrench in to the cog or the wheel of your understanding. And what we see is those other grounds. There were three types of soil.

There was a lack of understanding. And different levels, really. Of the path, of the foot path, or the foul ground as some translations might put it.

And then there's the stony soil or the soil that has stones in it. And then there are those that are the thorny soil. But all three of them produce no fruit.

There is a misunderstanding at three separate levels. And they do not produce fruit which is indicative of a new birth. But those who are born of God will produce fruit that is according to the very nature that has been given to them in such a new birth.

And so we see there is one that is called the good ground. And that is given and is ascribed to having an understanding. He understands it.

Which also bears fruit and brings forth some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty. We don't talk much about the mind anymore in church. The old Puritans did.

We don't take time to talk about the intellect. About the reasoning out of truth. It's the very place that the Spirit of God begins to convince of a truth or to reveal that which is a lie.

Now I don't want you to get upset with me. But do you know these old saints, the majority of modern Christians that have any spiritual sense about them, recognize immediately that these men walked with God. The theology was straight.

These men had a heart that was bent towards God. They talked about things that mattered. And they talked about the mind and the role of it, the understanding, the importance of it, and the nature of it regarding true Christianity.

But you know what? In modern Christianity we just don't talk much about it anymore. We get caught up with fancy phraseology and we have clichés that we like to swing around. We like to say things like, oh, it's not about the head.

It's all about the heart. Oh, we say things like this. Don't think too much upon it.

Just believe it. Just believe it. Don't think too much upon it.

We have so many popular anecdotes floating around in the jargon that we speak and the shallowness of things that we believe. Have we actually measured these little anecdotes against truth? Beloved, the Bible speaks a lot about the heart, but there's always a corresponding challenge to the mind, reasoning, meditating upon truth. These are all actions that take place in the intellect, in the mind.

And I'm not saying that you're saved in the realms of the mind. That's not what we're saying. But, beloved, we need to allow our minds to exercise and to ponder and to think upon truth, not allow our minds to go adrift and to use the reasoning faculties that God's given to us to take the truth and to reason upon the truth because there is a congruous melding together of the mind and the heart, and they seem to work together in the workings of grace.

We don't talk about that much anymore. And again, for those of you that are thinking I'm falling off of the wagon, please listen, I'm not negating the reality of the work of God's grace upon the human heart and also the indwelling darkness that all of us have natively on the inside that necessitates that work. I'm aware of that.

I'm aware that we need the light of grace to dawn upon the pitch night of our souls and hearts. I'm aware of that. But this is the thing.

There's nothing in me that can stir me to join the modern processional that seems to be militantly walking away from any influence of the Scriptures being pressed upon the mind by the Spirit of God that would lead to an understanding of truth. Beloved, truth settles in the heart after the mind has comprehended it. They work together.

Don't throw it out, church. Don't throw out logic. Don't throw out rationale.

Don't throw it out. Don't throw it away as our modern world in churchianity is so doing. Don't disregard the thoughts.

Don't disregard the meditation upon truth. Don't throw away the intellect engaging with the Spirit of God pressing upon it these colossal themes and truths of the Word of God because you'll never have understanding. If there's not understanding, there will not be fruitfulness.

If there's no fruitfulness, it is only an ensign. It is only an ensign that we are not His. We have not been born of God.

We have not passed from death to life. Amen? And again, I probably go overboard with some things. But I do it for a purpose.

Jesus always used hyperboles. A lot of people thought He was going overboard. Jesus didn't go overboard.

He used things of such radical nature for a reason to get people to think. He would say things like, you've got to hate your father and your mother. And people would just stop for a moment and say, well, that contradicts the law.

Not realizing He wasn't contradicting the law. He was just shaking them up a little bit with certain ways of speaking that they might begin to think. Amen? And so, I know that the heart is the seat of all of our affections.

Okay? Don't think that I'm backsliding. I understand that the miraculous work of God in the saving of a man's soul does in fact manifest in the realms of the heart. But there is a mysterious connection between the mind and the heart of man, and the Scriptures seem to constantly deal with both of them.

With both of them. And so, my point in dragging this out, I mean really dragging this out today in front of you, is that we must never discount or devalue the influence of Scripture upon the mind and upon the understanding, and its certain correlation to how grace affects and moves upon the heart. There is a direct tie between the two.

There is a direct tie between the two. I think the Puritans did a great job at presenting that. And so, when we see the parable being addressed here in Matthew chapter 13, it's a parable regarding the new birth.

The fruitful ground represents those who have been born of God. Yet we see these understanding the word of God. They understand it before they bring forth good fruit.

So, hearing mingled together with understanding is imperative unto fruitfulness or regeneration. We have other scriptural accounts of hearing the word of God mingled with the meditation of it. We hear meditate upon the word, meditate upon these truths, meditate upon them.

Then we see the psalmist constantly saying this. What would David say? At the end of a very strong statement, what would it be, Pastor Lunk? It would be, say, law. What does that mean? That means to pause and to meditate, to give thought, allow it to pierce the understanding.

And so, I'm going to say this. These activities occur in the mind. They take place in the mind.

Thoughts have to be contemplated. Truth must be contemplated. You must give attention to things in the mind and in the intellect.

Don't devalue that. That's where it's acknowledged. That's where things are discerned before they can be believed.

If you erase the intellectual facet, the processing of the thoughts, and the rationale according to Scripture, listen to this, you've removed the very process where truth is convinced. And if this happens, listen to me, if this happens, you've removed the very root system of faith. And consequently, it will give birth to a superficial system of belief that's rooted in nothing that will last.

That's why you see in Matthew chapter 13, those that have the heart that's not right, and there's stones in the soil, or there's thorns in the soil, there is roots that go down into things that do not last. But those that have an understanding, the roots are going down into that which cannot be moved. The Spirit of God has

convinced.

There's an understanding there. There's an understanding there. And so the common denominator, I think, that tie these very three types of fruitless soil together is that they all lack an understanding.

And so I don't want to go into a lengthy dissertation about that. We'll go to that some other day. But I want you to see the cause of the good soil being good is that there is a rightful understanding.

Why am I tying this in? I believe that in the world that we live in, and even in the cultural church, there is a gross misunderstanding of the new birth. I believe that it's the most colossal theme in the whole of the Bible, the new birth, being born of God. And I believe it's the most misappropriated and the most misunderstood truth in the whole sum of Scripture.

And so I want to go back to our text here. Here in John's prologue, we find the three terms that we've already discussed that really, in regard to our relation to Jesus Christ, these three are imperative, and they are namely knowing Jesus Christ and receiving Jesus Christ and believing upon His name. Now, I know and I believe that we've given proper attention to them in the weeks that have gone by.

But the most important thing is that we see, it says, to them gave He the power to become sons of God, or actually what He's saying, to them gave He the power to become Christians, to be born of God, not of the will of the flesh or these things. No, but to be born of God. And so I want to take just a little bit of time this morning and to give some sound biblical arguments regarding the glorious work of God according to the term that's been used here in the text by the apostle, and he's done so with a purpose, purposely.

The text concludes that God gives the power. Do you see the text? Verse 12, to them gave He the power to become. You can stop right there.

To them gave He the power to become something that was not, that becomes. Now, I'm going to make mention of something. I'm not going to argue over this a whole lot, but I do believe that it's important.

The term sons is what is being used in the King James, but I believe it's translator era. I believe it's inconsistent with John's literary style. Let me say why.

All through the gospel and the epistles of John, John repeatedly uses the term in talking about man's relation and redemption to God and God's relation to man. He calls us children. Is that true? Go and read 1st, 2nd, 3rd John.

And they're actually, they're about 16 or 17, actually 17 or 18 times whenever there's a very same apostle in making mention of our relation to God and God's relation to us, he calls us children, but only three times does he make mention as using the word sons. And so I believe that in this translation, it's a little incongruous with the literary style of the apostle to use the term sons instead of children. And I don't think... Well, you're changing the Bible there, mister.

He that adds to or takes away one word from this book, he's going to hell. And shake your religious finger at me. What I'm just saying is, is that this is a translation.

Are you with me? This was not penned by the apostle in English. You know that, right? It was not... The original is not King James, contrary to modern belief. This is a translation from a translation.

Are you with me? And so it's accurate and it's good and everything, but you must understand that those translators are not infallible. And I don't want to waste a whole lot of time about this, but I do want to talk about why I believe that it should be termed, as John has throughout the whole sync of the way that he talks in describing God's relation to his people, he calls them children. And there's a reason for that.

And let's go into that. To use the word son would be to have more of an objective meaning than to use the word children. And it points more to just a status or a position.

Now I want you to hang with me. I know it's getting warm in here because I'm getting warm and that tends to sleepiness. Can we turn on the air conditioners? But this is the thing.

When you use the term sons, it is objective as it might be and it is a position. It makes reference to a status. Something that results from an adoption.

When you use the term son, you're indicating the position that is held by a person or that's held by a child. It's a position. You're referring to the status of sonship with all of its prerogatives and with all of its privileges.

And the emphasis of it is upon the external, the objective and the aspect of the relationship. Now the word children here emphasizes something that is internal. Not something external as son, but something internal.

Something that partakes of the very same nature. And therefore it brings up the notion of a new birth, really. And this might not be world changing for you, but it is to guys like me, it means something.

When you're giving an accurate biblical exposition to exclude things like this, I believe would be really irresponsible. John facilitates the word children multiple times when he makes reference to the work of God in the heart, because I believe that he intentionally set out to show that it's not just a status. I believe that he set out intentionally to show that it's not just a legal matter.

It's not just a position. It's not just an adoption where we're given a name alone. No, it's more than a status.

It's a participation in the very divine nature of God. Children, they have a participation. Listen, I have two children here today and they carry my nature in them.

I have an adopted child as well. She does not carry my nature. She had the same privileges, the same prerogatives, the same rights.

She has the title. I call her my daughter, but she does not carry my nature. Are you with me? So these are my children.

She can never be. Does that make sense? And so there is a more defined and descriptive meaning with being called a child of God than just a son of God. We are not just adopted.

We are not just given an honorary title as Christian. We do not just have an access, a privilege, a right. It's not just that.

It's something more than that. We've been given the very nature of God. Yes, it's something more than just an honorary title, an adoption process.

It's the very workings of God that He has made us to partake of His very nature. So it's not just sons. It's children.

We participate not only in the rights and the privileges. Oh, yes, we have that. Oh, yes, we have access.

Oh, yes, He has given to us all things that pertain to life and Godliness. But, beloved, He's given to us His very nature. The adoption, not as sons, but as children.

Children of God. That's why I wanted to sing that song this morning. Oh, to be a child of God.

Beloved, this is the very thing that is within that has happened, this very birthing, this new life, this new birth. It's the very cause of our Christian joy and peace and happiness. That we are no longer aliens and separated.

No, we've been brought into a covenant with God to whereby God not only adopts us and just gives us a title. No, He puts in us His very nature. And this is why I believe that children is the acceptable term more so than sons.

Now, the Apostle says to those who received Him, to them gave He the power to become children of God. He uses the word in the King James Sons and I believe we've argued that it needs to be children for that very reason. It's more descriptive of the way that John wrote and spoke.

Amen? It says, to them gave He the power to become sons or children of God, even to them who believe on His name. And so the question is, what does this mean in the biblical sense? What does it mean when it states to them gave He the power to become sons of God or children of God? What does that mean? Well, I want to talk about it, what it doesn't mean. I want to talk about the credo of the modern church and what the credo of the modern church has become and what it is and how biblical it is in essence.

And I want you to listen to me. Before you get angry and puff up around the gills at me for some of the things I'm fixing to say, bear with me to the end and see where I'm coming from and then you can go, oh, don't get mad and think I'm going somewhere where I'm not going to go with this. I want you to remember that for the three weeks I expounded, I believe, with wonderful grace God supplied, about knowing and receiving and believing on the name of the Lord.

Did we not? Did we not go into great detail what it means to receive Jesus Christ? That there has to be on the inward most part that you welcome Him, that you prefer Him and everything that He is, everything that He has said, every dictate that He's given to us, every requisite that He demands of us, that we prefer them, that we welcome everything Jesus has said and who that He is. Get that square in your minds before I go forward so you don't get upset. It says to them that received Him, to them gave He the power.

Get that square in your minds. Let that sink into your understandings. And so what does this mean in the biblical sense? What is it saying here? Let me tell you what the modern definition of this would be.

The modern definition, when it says here, to them gave He the power, it would mean this, that you have the power in your own hands the very possibility to become a child of God. And I submit to you that's Catholic. Now remember what I said, don't get upset yet.

To the modern church, the credo I believe in the anthem of the modern church in the new birth today means that you have the power or the possibility to become a child of God. Now listen, hang with me. This

would mean that you have the power to exercise it.

You would have the power within yourself to decide what you do with it. It would mean that you lay hold of it and that you, because you've laid hold of it, then become a child of God. And again, I want to submit to you this is Roman Catholic doctrine.

It's their view of this text. It's erroneous. And it's also not only the Roman Catholic view, I believe it's the view of the modern church.

It's wrong. The Greek word *exousia*. Y'all think I'm smart? It's used 102 times in the New Testament.

It's not like the Greek word *dunamis*. It's a different word. It's the Greek word *exousia*.

And this is what it means. It means to have the capacity for. And of 102 times in the New Testament, not one of them is this word ever used in the sense of.

Physical or moral or spiritual strength to do or to accomplish something. Not one time. The meaning of the word is authority.

The meaning of the word is capacity. To them, gave he the authority to them, gave he the capacity to become children of God. It also means the right.

It also means the privilege. It also means the honor. One of the great reformers said it this way.

It means to be reckoned worthy of. To as many as received him, gave he gave this right to be reckoned worthy of being children of God, even to as many as believed on his name. And this is crucial.

This verse does not mean that the power is given to us to decide one way or another at this point, that our Lord places those who believe on him in a position of honor in which they really are children of God. He places them in a position of honor. It's not a possibility to be exercised in one way or the other.

It's something that happens to all of them who know him and who receive him and who believe on his name that he gives them the honor of being a child of God. Does it make sense? It doesn't sound like much, maybe to you, but the popular and the, I believe, grossly erroneous thought is much like the Roman Catholic belief in that we have the possibility to decide one way or another regarding becoming a child of God. If we know him, though, according to Scripture, if we receive him, and if we believe on his name, we are brought into a relationship as a child of God.

We are brought into a relationship as a child of God with the accompanying inward birth of his nature. Does this make sense? It's not saying here that we're given the power to make a decision. That's not what it's saying.

And you may be sitting here thinking, what difference does it make? It makes all the difference in the world. This is dealing with how we become sons and daughters of God, children of God. It's a miraculous work of God.

Whenever we know him, when we receive him, when we believe on his name, at this point, there's no decision to be made. God brings us into relation with him, giving us his nature, calling us his children. We're given the power.

We're given the capacity. We're given the authority of becoming a child of God. We're being reckoned worthy of it.

We're being reckoned worthy of it. Now let me intertwine into my argument that in receiving, as we have discussed, there's an element of responding to Jesus Christ. Don't go aloof about this.

Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. And in these workings where we're receiving Jesus Christ, now listen to me because this is important. In this work of God, God's dealing with the heart.

We're hearing the truth about Jesus Christ. We've welcomed him. We've preferred him.

All that he has said, all that he's required, all that he's commanded. Beloved, in this, there are responses that do indeed have decisions affixed to them. I love what Tozer says.

On the man part, there is a receiving. On man's part, there is this believing. But on the Godward part, listen, this is what we're pressing.

On the God part, there's a seizing upon. There's a seizing to where God comes in great power and authority and gives to us the very honor of becoming. And beloved, in this becoming, there is no decision to be made.

It's just the work of God that translates man out of darkness and into the light of his glorious kingdom, beloved. These are things that are important although we pass by them with no thought. Remember we talked about understanding? Producing? There's a reason I mentioned that.

Our generation lacks understanding of this truth. We need it. We need it.

It's crucial. It's crucial. So there is responses.

There is decisions affixed. But beloved, it's in this preparatory work to where the Spirit of God through the Scriptures is convincing to where there is a reasoning out and a working in the mind and in the intellect and in the understanding, a convincing of truth. Are you with me? But beloved, this great work of God, this power, this is all of grace.

This is all of God. And there at this point is no deciding one way or another. But if you go and study theology according to the Roman Catholic Church, what you will find is is at this point then there is a decision to be made when there is not.

Beloved, the convincing is something that God does in the human heart as the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed. Our hearts are convinced there is a meditating, a pondering. There is a wrestling, a groveling as it might be in the mind over these truths.

And then the heart becomes convinced. You're cast over upon Jesus Christ. Where you sing with Edward Mote his great hymn, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust in the sweetest frame, but I wholly believe on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand because all other ground is sinking sand. Yea, even Roman Catholic ground.

Now, the next word that we come to is the word become. And I believe these words are very, very important. And I believe that they're necessary for sound biblical exposition.

The lack of these words being given to us and spoken of in detail biblically, I believe is the cause of a thousand doctrinal woes in our generation and in our modern churchianity. The text here says, to as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become. Think about that word.

To become is indicative of something that has not been become. Now, what about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? He never became the Son of God. We've already looked at this, that he was with God in the beginning.

But, beloved, there is a huge slander of this very text in the market of religious fanfare. There's a group of people that will fight over this. They assemble themselves together and they call themselves witnesses for Jehovah.

And that's what they preach. That Jesus became the Son, albeit the Scripture says that he was the Son from the beginning. There's never a beginning and nor will there be ever an end to the Son of God.

Always, always with the Father in the beginning. Now, we are told in Scripture that Christ became flesh. But we're never told that he became the Son.

The Son always existed. But this word indicates that something has happened. Something has happened.

There's been a change. John's very careful about telling us what it is that happens. In fact, it's the very meaning of verse 13 where it says, which were born.

Look at the word. Which were born. That means come into being that was not before.

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh. And we'll unpack this maybe next week if the Lord be willing for it. Nor of the will of man, but of God.

Something has changed. John's very careful about how he tells us what happens here. They have to be born before they can become.

The whole emphasis in every word that is used is upon the great change that takes place. Have you changed? You've been changed. It's not that we're just given a status.

It's not that we're only given a position. That can and that does happen. You can adopt a child and you can put that child into the position of your child and give that same child all the same privileges as your child.

But there will never be a change of their nature, will there? Will there? There's not a becoming really in the real sense of the word becoming. In adoption. As we adopt.

Take that through a moment. The word became flesh in a very real sense, did he not? And also those who receive him become in the very and selfsame real sense, we become the children of God. The word became flesh, yes, in a very real sense of the word becoming.

We become children of God, yes, in the very real sense. We have His nature on the inside of us. We, in fact, do have a position.

We do, in fact, have a name. We do, in fact, have privileges and rights that are given to us as children of God. But, beloved, the very thrust of this is we have His nature.

How could God hold me accountable to love you if His nature of love is not on the inside of me? Hmm? How can He hold me accountable to walk as Jesus walked in the very spirit that was in Jesus Christ? Doesn't entwine me. Beloved, we are not only partakers in the facilitating of His name, nor we've been given His nature, and He holds us accountable and responsible as His dear children because He's given us all things that pertain to life and to godliness because of the spirit of Christ that indwells us. We are participants in the very nature of God.

Not only do we have the rights and the privileges as His children, we have the very nature of God inside of us. This is the new birth. This is what the Apostle was trying to bring before us in this great and colossal text that we find here.

To them gave He the power to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name. They become. They become.

They become children of God. Something that was not. Beloved, not a metamorphosis.

Not the transitioning of what is to make it something better. But beloved, it is a birthing. It is something that God does miraculously and causes to be that was not before.

It's a becoming. It's a becoming. Beloved, in an adoption, a child that's adopted never becomes.

But in the new birth, we become. We become children of God. We are partakers of His nature.

We're given His spirit to indwell us as the children of the Most High. Amen. And this brings us to the next phrase.

What do we become? We become children of God. We become children of God. And once again, this is a very specific definition, isn't it? It's very specific.

It's very purposed in its use here by the apostle. I think it's important that we take time to give it an accurate biblical exposition to the truths that our generation is lacking. We say that we're children of God with almost a passive likeness and flippancy.

Don't we? Don't we? But beloved, as God's dear children, is it not important for us to dig down to the wells that have true life and clean water down in them? To gain a sense of deep knowing and a sense of accurate knowing, biblical knowing, about these tremendous and colossal themes of the Bible. This deep knowing about the new birth gives a very deep appreciation of what it means to be a child of God. Appreciation births adoration.

Adoration gives birth to enjoyment. And I'm going to talk about that too in time to come. But you know, in this new birth, being children of God, there should be a delight and an enjoyment.

Being a Christian, beloved, should be a happy, joyful thing. We should not be walking around with a scowl on our face. Beloved, if our roots of knowledge and understanding of what He has done for us and He's doing in us, if that comes to an awakening on the inside of you and you think upon it and you ponder it, beloved, it's going to spring up on the inside of you with the fullness of joy, then you're going to be the happiest Christian that's ever lived.

Christians should be the happiest people on the earth. What God has done for us, what God has done toward us, what God is doing on the inside of us in this very moment, beloved, it should birth adoration

and praise, but also joy and happiness. We shouldn't be walking around with a scowl on our face saying, oh, I'm ten dollars short this month on my bills and my life has fallen apart.

You have forgotten what you have been purged from. And so, to be a child of God, to be a child of God is just simply not a title given. I'm pressing that purpose to me.

We've been given a name, but it's more than a name. We've been given a name in the nature, not simply a title. You can have a title and stay the same person.

You can bestow upon me the honorary title of doctorate of divinity and I'll be just as dumb as I ever was. Truly. Honorary titles.

But when John speaks here of being a child of God, he's not talking about giving and receiving an honorary title that leaves a person absolutely unchanged. This is not what it speaks of. But beloved, this is what's being promoted out there in modern Christendom, is it not? Oh, just make a decision.

Make a decision and you'll be a child of God. Is this not what's being preached? And we wonder why they're going still to the bar on Friday night and getting drunk with the church, staying up late on Saturday night carousing with their buddies and they never make the meeting house on Sunday morning. Why? Because there was never a change of nature? We've made a decision.

Just like Rome. There's never been the power of God demonstrated in the life of that individual to whereby they have been brought into participating in the very nature of God. That's salvation, beloved.

It's not walking forward and repeating their prayer. It's not coming forward and making a decision and being told you're now a child of God on the basis of your decision. Beloved, I believe that we need to proclaim the gospel.

And I believe we need to instruct our children and the church of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and even those that are without, what it means to know Him. What, in fact, does it mean to receive Him? What does it mean to believe upon His name? And allow those thoughts to spin in circles within the mind until it sinks down under the pressure of the Holy Ghost into the understanding to produce in them something of God. To where God comes in power because they have known, because they have received, and because they've believed on His name and consequently there has a becoming that's taken place.

A power given to them to whereby they are no longer children of wrath as others. But know that they've become a child of God. Not only with an honorary title as Christian, that's been conferred by a preacher or by the signing of a card to where they have the very nature of God that's been put inside of them by the very power of His workings and grace.

This is the gospel. How foreign it is to the culture that we live in. And so we're children of God in the sense that children, like their parents, have something in them of the nature of their parents.

My children have a piece of my nature in them. Cody used my duck-killing nature this morning. Lindy has so much of my personality in her.

It's her steadfast, unwavering mood that just stays the same. Unless her puppy dies. But they have a part of my nature.

So do your children have a part of yours if they are your children? Being a child of God means that we have been and are being transformed into the very likeness of God. This means there's a change in my perceptions. Listen to me.

It means there's a change in my emotions, there's a change in my attitude, there's a change in my preferences, there's a change in my capacity, there's a change in my ability, and on and on and on. 2 Peter 1, 3-4 says this, According as His divine power hath given us all things that pertain to life, and godliness, through the knowledge of Him, through the what? Through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding and great and precious promises, that by these ye may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And this is what it means in John's prologue.

Whenever he addresses to them, He gave He the power to become children of God. That we have His nature. And then also we're becoming more and more like Him.

1 John 3, 2, Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. When He appears we will be like Him. Why? How can we be like Him if we didn't have His nature inside of us that transforms us into His likeness? It wouldn't be by adhering to practices alone.

The practices that He did, things that He did, it was all part of His nature. He says I'm only doing what I see my Father do. Are you with me? He didn't do to make Him that.

He did that because He was that. And it is the same with us. We don't do these things so that we can become.

We do these things because we have become. There it is again. We have become.

And because we have become. We love because God is love. Isn't that right? We love because we have become.

God is love. We have become. We have His nature.

We love because we have become in nature like God. And that's why we love. That's why John gives us the test.

This is how you can know that you have passed from death to life because you love. The great test. 1 John chapter 3. Go through there.

You walk as Jesus walked. Why? The very Spirit of Jesus indwells you. It's not that you're made a Christian by doing those things.

You do those things just because you've been born of Him. His nature indwells you. And it's very consistent with your nature.

We could go on all day, couldn't we? But I think it's important that we press what it means to be a child of God. It's the very power of God at work. Inwardly.

Whereby we are changed from one glory to another and from one grace to another. Whereby we become more like Him and more like Him and more like Him. The very notion that we have become the children of

God without a radical change of our very nature is not only faulty, but it's devilish.

And we find out, of course, in the epistles of John, 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John, what it looks like. If you've been born of God, this is what it will look like. If you're born of God, this is how you will live.

This is what you will see in your life. And if there's a lack of it, it's because you've not been born of God. If you've been born of God, you will love even those that don't love you.

You'll forgive even if they don't forgive you. You'll be kind and patient and long-suffering and good and merciful and meek and humble towards others because God's nature is in you. If there is a lack of these things in you, beloved, the challenge is, is are you and have you become a child of God? I'm not saying there's not a possibility of a temporal lapse into that which you've come from because that's not what I'm saying.

I have lapsed, and so have you. I've not stayed there, nor have you. The very evidence that you have been born of God is that you cannot live the way that you used to live.

You can't. You cannot. You cannot continue sinning.

You cannot continue sinning. First John. You cannot continue sinning.

Why? It's dissimilar to your Christlike nature. When you've been born of God, you have become. You have become in the very real sense of becoming, just as Christ became flesh in the very real and tangible sense, you have become, and you no longer can continue sinning.

Why? Because you've become. You've been born of God, and now you are his little children. And now you're his little children.

And so, first John tells us what transformed living looks like. Looks like Christ. Looks like Him.

And so, the evidence of our adoption, and not only adoption, but it's not adoption in the way that we adopt. There's a bringing in, but also there's a putting in. There's a bringing in to the family, but there's also a putting in to you, God's nature.

It's a becoming, a real becoming, in the real sense of the word. And the evidence of it is by the way we live. We've become the very children of God.

And so, but as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. But of God. Have you experienced this birth? Have you? Has there been a radical change of nature? Have you been begotten of God? Is there evidence in your life? Do you love the brethren, regardless of the way they treat you? Do you just have a love? Are you drawn to a symbol here, without being forced or browbeaten by the pastor? Do you have a desire to assemble together with the people of God's symbol, because there's a love that you can't even define for them? And a love for God that could not shrink back from Him, but that you just must come, because it's consistent with your very heart of hearts, to be here assembling in worship, and to be a witness of Jesus Christ in every area of your life, and to worship and to give thanks to Him for all that He's done? Have you been born of God? Have you been begotten of Him? Do you know Him? Have you received everything about Him, everything that He is? And have you received everything that He isn't? Think about this.

We talked about this last time, that we are so good at creating a God that looks just like us. We either have a God that we've created that is so informal, and so passive, that would never hold anyone accountable. Then you have those that create a God that is so stringent and strict, that no one can get in.

Then you create a God that you have to get so worked up and fanatical, and jump up and down and work up a lather, and the more you get worked up, the more He loves you. People create gods after their own desires, their own natural bends. Beloved God has revealed Himself to us in the Scripture, and we are to conform to Him.

And it's not an arduous task for us, because His commandments aren't grievous to us. And why aren't they? Because His nature is on the inside of us, and that's why His commandments aren't grievous. We love them.

We love them. So let me ask you this. Have you become? Have you believed in His name? Have you received Him? Has He given to you the power to become? To become a child of God.

Has He given you that power? Has there been a real becoming? Has there been a birthing? Have you been born of God? Have you? Is there evidence of it? Do you love Him? Do you prefer Him? Do you prefer the people of God? Do you love them? Is this evidence in you? Or are you still in your sins, all the while memorizing Scriptures? It's all quite possible. Satan must have dedicated quite a span of time in his life to memorizing Scripture, because he used it against God's side. Quoted it from him.

He didn't break out a Gideon Bible out of his pocket and read it. He knew it. Hated it.

He knew it. Has there been a real becoming in the sense of what that means? Father, just give us understanding. Understanding.

The Holy Ghost would press down in our minds these truths that we might understand. You know, we might produce fruit some 30, some 60, some 100-fold, as much as has been planted. For whatever word of this, Lord, sink down into the depths of our consciousness and help them to be weighed out.

Weighed out and seized upon by faith in Jesus. Amen.

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