

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
April 29, 2018

The Holy Spirit and Born-again  
Titus 3:3-7

3:3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

3:4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,

3:5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

3:6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

3:7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

### **1. Need of Born-again**

Since we have Pentecost in three weeks, let's learn about the work of the Holy Spirit. Today, we are going to learn about how the Holy Spirit renews the believers. It is called "renewal" or "regeneration" for the Holy Spirit to renew humans. In English, it is called "born again" and it is very important because humans need to be born again to be saved. Jesus Himself said so and it is written in John 3:1-15.

One day, a Jewish leader called Nicodemus came to see Jesus. At that time, ordinary people appreciated the teaching of Jesus, but the leaders were against it. Despite of these leaders, there were a few people like Nicodemus who thought that a teaching of Jesus came

from God. You can tell by him using “we” but not “I”. In John 3:2, Nicodemus says, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” He did not say this for courtesy but he honestly expressed what he thought. Nicodemus sought for truth and loved God. Because he realized that God was talking to him through Jesus, Nicodemus could not help coming to Jesus. Those who loves truth always come to Jesus.

Nicodemus was ready to accept Jesus’s word, but he was shocked when Jesus said “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3) But he responded “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” (John 3:4)

Jesus replied in John 3:5-6 “ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” “Born of the flesh” refers to “ born again” at a human level. Even if humans are born again numerous times, they cannot enter the kingdom of God as far as they’ve come to this world as a sinner. As “Born of the spirit” indicates, people cannot enter the kingdom of God unless they are born again into an entirely new existence by the Holy Spirit.

This is beyond the reach of Nicodemus’s understanding. Just like other Jewish leaders, Nicodemus thought that people would get to salvation if they would observe the law, change and improve themselves. The 19<sup>th</sup> century people had a similar thought. They believe humans were “evolving” and that the world was reaching the

ideal society. However, in the 20th century, they experienced two world wars. Through the cold war, they learned that humans were so fragile, and this world could be easily destroyed by nuclear war. The 21st century is an era of technology: scientific technology has advanced, and everything has become convenient. Nevertheless, we cannot be 100% sure if this world is making people truly happier. The world is distorted with immorality and facing the problems of terrorist attacks, civil wars, and destruction of environment. Now is the time when people and the world need a drastic change, that is to be born of the Holy Spirit again.

## **2. Result of Born-again**

So, how people can be born again? Jesus told Nicodemus, in John 3:7-8, “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Here Jesus used the words “wind” and “Spirit,” and both words are originally the same in Greek. When the wind blows between the branches, it makes sounds. We don’t see the wind, but we see the result of blowing. So, we don’t see how people are born again, but we see the result of it.

People often advertise using pictures of before/after. They say, “After using this soap it brings out such cleanness,” or “Before applying this hair product, his hair was almost gone!” Before believing Jesus and after believing Jesus, and before being born again and after being born again, there is a huge difference. So were the apostles of Jesus Christ. Many of them were the fishermen or tax

collectors in Galilee, they met Jesus to learn and know the truth of His kingdom. However, when Jesus was crucified, they forgot Jesus and went away from persecution. They got education from Jesus, but it didn't make them perfect, until they got Pentecost. After receiving the Spirit, they didn't fear anything and spoke out Jesus Christ with great boldness. The Spirit made them born again and they became the ambassador of the kingdom, no longer the "unschooled, ordinary men." (Acts 4:13)

Paul was a leader of persecution to Christian. However, he was born again through the Spirit and spoke out the faith of Christian people. Wherever Paul was on missionary, people believed Jesus and experienced the Spirit to be born again. Paul said to Corinthian Christian, in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." It is explaining the same thing, "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5) Corinthian Christian were "washed" and changed right about face. Truly believing Jesus Christ, they always experienced the change, or result of being born again.

Many people determine to change themselves when recognizing their shortcomings or weaknesses. They try hard to be born again. Yet

they won't be able to achieve it only by determination or efforts. Not trying to be born again, they need to be truly born again by the Spirit, and the Spirit can do it. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 it says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." The Holy Spirit can make you the new creation, all the believers. The process wouldn't be visible, but the result of the Holy Spirit can be seen in the Bible, in the history, and in the people close to you. The Holy Spirit still works now. The believers can be the new creation through the Spirit, and they can be born again with His grace.

### **3. Blessings of Born-again**

Lastly, let's look at the blessing that given by born-again. Firstly, we would like to make sure that born-again itself is the blessing of God. We did not receive born-again because we are awesome, faithful, or good. According to Titus 3:3-5, "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." You were far away from God's expectation but you have received rebirth, and this is truly God's blessing and mercy. "Born-again" is the blessing of God.

Secondly, thanks to the rebirth, God lets the Holy Spirit to live in us. In Titus 3:6, "The Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior," This means that the Holy

Spirit will be with you who believe in Jesus Christ and is saved. The Holy Spirit will be with believers in order to encourage and teach them.

There is a word, “gifts of the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit gives us the knowledge and various spiritual powers, and it is called “gifts of the Holy Spirit.” However, this is used when we refer the Holy Spirit itself. (Act 2:38) The Holy Spirit itself is given to you as a gift There is no greater gift that the Holy Spirit is the source of all blessings, and it is with us all the time.

Thirdly, the blessing that you will be the heirs of the God’s Kingdom. In Titus 3:7, “so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.” To be reborn by the Holy Spirit means becoming a child of God. If so, the kingdom of God is promised for the people who was born again.

This is mentioned in Romans 8:17, “and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” We were far from the Kingdom of God. We could never get into God’s holy kingdom where righteousness and justice domain because of our sins. However we became heirs of God’s Kingdom. What a great grace and privileged we were given through born again!

Fanny Crosby wrote a hymn, “Blessed Assurance.”

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

This sings the privilege of the heir of God’s Kingdom, the redemption

by the blood of the cross, born again by the Holy Spirit, and the forgiveness and sanctification of sins. She was blind and could not see the physical light by her eyes in her whole life. But, She could see the glory of God with her spiritual eyes, and listed God's grace given to her and praised God.

Crosby had the grace of born-again as her own. So, she could sing "This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior, all the day long." The grace of born-again and its result did not belong to only the Biblical time or other people, it became "my" story. She said it in her song. No one can say, "I don't need the grace of born-again." Everyone could be born again by the Holy Spirit. I pray that the grace of born-again may become "your" story and testimony like Crosby experienced born-again and it became her story.

**(Prayer)**

Father, You give born-again to sinners by the Holy Spirit and make them your children. We give thanks and praises to You because of Your great mercy. Help us to have the assurance of the grace of born-again and witness it as the hymn sings. Many people may have the grace of born-again through our testimony. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.