

The Holy Spirit and New Birth

John 3:1-15

Introduction:

We are continuing our series on the Holy Spirit. We often neglect, misunderstand, and forget how much we need him in our lives.

J.I. Packer states:

The Christian's life in all its aspects – intellectual and ethical, devotional and relational, upsurging in worship and outgoing in witness – is supernatural; only the Spirit can initiate and sustain it. So apart from him, not only will there be no lively believers and no lively congregations, there will be no believers and no congregations at all.

Too often we forget the message of the Gospel – we are saved by grace and we grow by grace. We often revert back to a performance paradigm. “My growth is dependent on my efforts.” We cannot be saved or grow apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. During this series we are seeking to grow in our understanding of who He is and what He does.

This week we see the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Nicodemus. Nicodemus, a Pharisee, first came to Christ under the cloak of night, not wanting anyone to see him. Yet he was curious. “Who is Jesus and what is he really teaching?” His curiosity led to confusion. His confusion was replaced by faith and a new life – a changed life. As we take a closer look at the story of Nicodemus we see the Holy Spirit “implanting new life” in Nicodemus. As we reflect on this concept it should:

- Humble Us
- Amaze Us
- Change Us

Let's explore these three ideas.

Discuss:

1. As you reflect on the sermon, what stood out to you? What challenged you? Were there any questions you wanted answered?

Humbles Us

2. Like Nicodemus, we often forget the gospel of grace and fall back on a performance paradigm. We focus on the external appearance of looking righteous. Why do you think we struggle with proving our righteousness?

3. The Holy Spirit implants new life in us. How does this keep us humble?

Amazes Us

4. We are born again by the blood and sacrifice of Christ. As Christians we often take this for granted. Reflect on how Christ's sacrifice is so amazing!

Changes Us

5. This encounter with Jesus led to a changed life. We read in John 19 that Nicodemus along with Joseph of Arimathea took Christ's body from the cross and prepared it for burial. Before Nicodemus came to Christ under the cloak of night so that no one would see him. Now, as the Holy Spirit plants new life in him, he becomes bold and risks his life to be associated with Jesus. How have you seen the Holy Spirit change your life?

Apply

As a Christian, we need to realize salvation and growth is not dependent on our efforts – we bring nothing to the table. Take a moment to pray and reflect on these thoughts:

Humble me: Ask God - where have I been proud? God, you have shown me so much grace, where do I need to show more grace? To a friend, spouse, child, co-worker?

Amaze me: Has my faith just become rote? Help me to take time to slow down and take in the amazing story of the Gospel in my life.

Change me: What are the areas in my life that need to change? Where do I need to yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit?