

Are You Born Again?

John 3:1-8

By Dr. James Van Dyke

Are you born again? This is a very important question for all who want to be Christians to be able to answer. Jesus said: *“I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again”* (John 3:3).

So many people in the church are not sure of the answer to this important question. Assurance of salvation should be real for everyone who is a Christian.

But how can we know for sure? Because you've had a certain emotional or spiritual experience, perhaps? No! That is too unreliable. Assurance of salvation must be based on faith and fact, not feeling.

We are given five acid tests in 1 John by which we can reliably judge ourselves (not others) in this regard.

Do you practice righteousness?

If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him. (1 John 2:29).

A born again Christian is holy—set apart unto God—committed to God's will, doing what pleases God and avoiding what God hates. We cannot perfectly do this in the flesh, but a born-again Christian wills to do the will of God who sent Jesus.

The orientation of this life is toward righteousness. He has chosen the ***straight way*** and ***narrow gate***. He no longer is a slave to Satan, but is a servant to Christ. He loves being a butterfly and would not return to the cocoon!

A born-again Christian is also painfully aware that he is a sinner—redeemed only through the blood of Jesus. He knows there is indwelling corruption, but he resists it. He does not consent continually to evil, even though he still may fall from time to time. He has not become perfect in the flesh.

A born again Christian continually looks to Jesus, not the world as his example. He does not try to keep up with the Joneses or any other human. He tries to live up to the best he knows in Jesus through God's Word. Praise God, the fact that we are imperfect does not prove we are not born-again. A born-again Christian can say: *“I am not what I ought to be; I am not what I want to be; I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be; and by the grace of God, I am His!”*

Do you love other Christians?

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death" (1 John 3:14).

A born-again Christian has a special love for all true disciples. He loves all people with a general love, even as God does, but has a special love for those who are one in Christ with Him. Even though he may never have met them, they are brothers and sisters in Christ as expressed in the poem, *In Christ There Is No East or West: "Who serves my father as a son is surely kin to me."*

There may be many real differences between us as Christians, but if we are all born-again believers, there is a oneness that nothing can destroy: *"We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord."*

Jesus said this is the acid test of being his disciples: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).*

The first fruit of the Spirit is love. Love is the greatest of the abiding virtues: *"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).*

This love will be costly for us, just as for our Lord: *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (1 John 3:16)*

We must be compassionate toward the unfortunate: *"Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18).*

Do you believe Jesus is Savior?

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well" (1 John 5:1).

Savior is the closest a Gentile Christian can come to understanding the real meaning of the word **Christ**, which is the Greek word used to translate the Hebrew word **Messiah**.

A born-again Christian believes deep down that this is who Jesus is: *[T]he lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*. We run up against doubts, attacks within and without, heresies, and fears; but none shall be able to shake us from this conviction. Believing like this is a consequence, not the cause of the new birth! It is a continuing activity produced in us by the new birth, by which we became and continue to be God's children.

A born-again Christian understands that Jesus is the one and only Savior. He is the Divine Son of God who came into the world to die for our sins according to the plan of God. Through Him we have forgiveness of our sins, because He paid the wages of sin for us on the cross. *"There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin; He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in."*

There is today much question, even within the church, about who Jesus is. This is going to get worse and will become a theological battle that will divide the church. But remember the Bible says the born-again Christian believes and will continue to believe that Jesus is the Christ.

Are you an overcomer?

“...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

Are you still in love with the world or has the world lost its charm for you? This is important to face—for a born-again Christian is no longer enslaved by the world or worldly things: *“We know that we are children of God, and that the world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19).*

He does not use the world’s opinions as his standards of right and wrong, good and bad. He is able to go against the world’s ways, ideas, customs. He is not really concerned about what men think and say about him but only about how God sees and judges him. He loves God’s praise more than man’s. He is more afraid of offending God than of offending man. He has overcome the world in the sense that the new birth takes us out of the sphere of the world’s control, where Satan rules, and has made us members of the family of God forever. *“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Col. 1:13).*

John deliberately says **whatsoever** rather than **whosoever** to emphasize the victorious power rather than the victorious person. It is not the man, but his new birth from God that conquers. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

Are you an habitual sinner?

“We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him” (1 John 5:18).

That is a startling statement to sinners’ ears. But the meaning is cleared up in: *“No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:9)*

No one who is born of God **practices** sin. A born-again Christian cannot always prevent evil thoughts from entering his mind, but he refuses to entertain them. He will from time to time be guilty of shortcomings, defects and omissions in both his words and actions but he can affirm that these things cause him grief and regret and that his desire is to overcome them. He will strive against sin in his life as the Holy Spirit enables him. **And that is the secret.**

The new birth results in new behavior. Sin and the child of God are incompatible. They may occasionally meet, but they cannot live together in harmony.

Here, then, are five clear marks of a born-again Christian. Put positively they are:

- A born-again Christian seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- A born-again Christian loves all other Christians and desires fellowship.
- A born-again Christian has an unshakable faith in Jesus as Savior.
- A born-again Christian overcomes the world in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- A born-again Christian strives against sin in his life and does not habitually sin—through the keeping power of Christ.

Do you have these characteristics in your life?

If so, you can have every assurance that you are born again and will persevere in your salvation: *"...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 1:6).

If not, the Lord is waiting, knocking. Why not let Him come in?