

Not of Human Will, but of God

Born of God • Part 4 of 4

PRIMARY TEXT: John 1:12-13

DISCUSSION GUIDE: 30-45 Minutes

SUPPORTING TEXTS: Romans 3:10-12; Romans 9:10-16

The first three studies in this series considered the privilege of becoming God's children, the Spirit's life-giving work, and John's declaration that the new birth is not inherited through bloodline. John 1:13 now brings the contrast to its highest point: God's children are born not by human will, but of God.

This truth does not make faith, evangelism, or prayer unnecessary. It tells us where their hope and power are found. We truly receive Christ and believe in His name, yet the life from which faith springs is God's merciful work. Because salvation belongs to Him, we may speak the gospel faithfully, pray dependently, and entrust those we love to the only Savior.

CENTRAL TRUTH

The new birth does not originate in human desire, decision, effort, or influence. It is God's merciful, life-giving work, which brings sinners willingly to faith in Jesus Christ.

1

Not of Human Will

READ JOHN 1:12-13

John holds two truths together. Those who become God's children really receive Christ and believe in His name. Yet their new birth does not originate in bloodline, the will of the flesh, or the will of man. Its decisive source is God.

Human response is therefore real, but it is not self-created spiritual life. A person does not produce the new birth by making a better choice than others, summoning sufficient resolve, or performing the correct religious act. Just as no one causes his or her own natural birth, no sinner causes the birth from above.

The words "but of God" direct every believer away from boasting. Faith is not evidence of superior wisdom or willpower. It is the response of a person whom God has graciously made alive and drawn to His Son.

THE DECISIVE SOURCE

We truly come to Christ, but our coming is not the cause of the new birth. God gives life, renews the heart, and brings His people willingly to His Son.

DISCUSSION

1. What does John affirm about the believer's response to Christ, and what does he deny about the source of the new birth?
2. How do the words "but of God" remove both pride and self-reliance from saving faith?

2 No One Seeks for God

READ ROMANS 3:10-12

Paul's description of fallen humanity is comprehensive: none is righteous, none understands, and none seeks for God. Sin does not merely affect outward behavior. It reaches the mind, desires, affections, and will, turning the whole person away from God.

This does not mean that people cease to make choices or become less than human. It means that the natural will acts from a heart estranged from God. Left to ourselves, we do not seek Him as He truly is or submit to Christ on His terms. We need more than persuasion or improvement; we need a new heart and new life.

Our inability does not cancel responsibility. God's commands reveal what is right, while our refusal reveals the depth of sin. The answer is not to excuse unbelief, but to abandon confidence in ourselves and look to the mercy of God in Christ.

A WILL IN BONDAGE

The problem is not that people never choose. It is that the fallen heart does not choose God rightly until grace gives new life and freedom to come to Christ.

DISCUSSION

- ? 3. According to Romans 3, how deeply does sin affect our natural response to God?
- ? 4. Why does human inability lead us to seek mercy rather than excuse unbelief or trust greater effort?

3 God Who Has Mercy

READ ROMANS 9:10-16

Paul points to Jacob and Esau before either had done good or bad so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand - not because of works, but because of Him who calls. Salvation rests upon God's purpose rather than human merit.

Paul then answers the charge of injustice by directing us to God's words to Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy." Mercy cannot be demanded as a wage or claimed as a debt. If it were owed, it would no longer be mercy. God remains righteous, free, and compassionate in all He does.

The conclusion speaks directly: salvation does not depend on the one who wills or runs, but on God who has mercy. This humbles the believer and strengthens assurance. The God who begins salvation by mercy does not leave its foundation resting on unstable human resolve.

MERCY, NOT MERIT

God's mercy is never payment for a good work, a wise decision, or a determined will. Every child of God is a monument to undeserved grace.

DISCUSSION

- ? 5. What contrasts in Romans 9:10-16 show that salvation rests on God's purpose and mercy rather than human merit?
- ? 6. Why is sovereign mercy humbling to human pride and strengthening to a believer's assurance?

No Human Savior

READ JOHN 1:13 ONCE MORE

John also rules out the will of another person as the source of the new birth. A parent, spouse, child, friend, pastor, or teacher may deeply desire someone's salvation, but no human being can create spiritual life in another.

This truth releases us from a burden God never assigned. We are called to teach Scripture, proclaim Christ, pray earnestly, live faithfully, and love patiently. These are meaningful acts of obedience and means God is pleased to use, but they are not levers by which we control His saving work.

We must not confuse faithfulness with saving power. We can present the gospel clearly, but only God opens the heart. We can nurture our children carefully, but only God gives birth from above. We can plead for those we love, but Christ alone is the Savior.

FAITHFUL WITNESS, NOT SAVIOR

Love people enough to teach, speak, pray, and persevere. Trust God enough to remember that their new birth depends on His mercy, not your ability to produce it.

DISCUSSION

7. What responsibilities has God given us toward those who do not yet believe, and what power has He reserved for Himself?
8. How can confusing faithful witness with saving power produce fear, pressure, manipulation, or despair?

Pray, Speak, and Trust God

READ JOHN 1:12-13 AND ROMANS 9:16

God's sovereignty does not silence evangelism or prayer; it gives them hope. We proclaim Christ because those born of God truly receive Him and believe in His name. We pray because the needed power belongs to God, not to our eloquence, timing, or persistence.

If you do not yet believe, do not use inability as a reason to wait. Scripture directs you to Christ. Receive Him, believe in His name, and ask God for the mercy you cannot produce. No willing sinner is told to remain away until he can explain God's hidden work.

If you are burdened for someone you love, continue to speak with grace, pray with confidence, and practice patient faithfulness. Refuse both manipulation and despair. The new birth is beyond your power, but it is not beyond God's. Entrust your loved one to His wisdom, mercy, and sovereign care.

HOPE FOR THE HELPLESS

Because salvation is God's work, no heart is beyond His power. Because He is God, we may obey faithfully without pretending that the outcome rests in our hands.

DISCUSSION

9. How should God's sovereignty shape the courage, humility, and hope with which you share the gospel and pray?
10. Whom are you tempted to carry as though his or her salvation depended on you, and what would it look like to pray, speak, and trust God instead?

6 Closing Summary

- Believers truly receive Christ, but the new birth originates in God rather than human will.
- Sin reaches the whole person; we need new life, not merely stronger resolve or better instruction.
- Salvation depends upon God who has mercy, excluding merit and giving all glory to Him.
- No human being can create spiritual life in another, but God calls us to faithful witness, prayer, and love.
- God's sovereignty gives hope: we may come to Christ and entrust those we love to His saving power.

CLOSING PRAYER

Merciful God, humble us beneath Your Word and take away our confidence in human will, effort, or influence. Thank You for giving life and bringing sinners to Your Son. Make us faithful in speaking the gospel, earnest in prayer, patient in love, and peaceful as we entrust those we love to You. Give all the glory of salvation to Christ alone. Amen.

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NOTES & COMMITMENTS
