

“As the Wind Blows”
John 3:8
(Preached at Trinity, August 23, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 3** opens with the introduction of Nicodemus.
John 3:1 NAU - "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;"
2. He was a man of position, of influence. He was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. But he recognized that there was something uniquely different about Jesus. So, he came secretly by night for fear of the other Pharisees.
3. Nicodemus was religious, but he was not yet born again. As Nicodemus listened to Jesus, he was highly confused. The words of Jesus were incomprehensible to him. Jesus was telling him something about being born a second time. How is this possible?
John 3:3-4 NAU - "Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"
4. Jesus told him it was essential for him to have a right understanding of the Kingdom of God but that this would be impossible without a spiritual rebirth.
John 3:6 NAU - "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."
5. By this time Nicodemus' head must have been spinning. "Born again?" "Born of the Spirit?" How does this all happen? Jesus tells him,
John 3:6 NAU - "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."
6. This is a birth wrought by the Holy Spirit.
Then Jesus describes for Nicodemus the working of the Holy Spirit.
 - A. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. It could be warm inside and it was customary to spend time on the flat roof of the house. Perhaps a breeze was blowing and Jesus used a play on words to describe the working of the Holy Spirit. There was no mistaking the wind was there but where it came from and where it was going was a mystery.
 - B. The name Holy Spirit owes its origin to His mode of existence- He is a spirit.
 1. The Hebrew word רִיחַ means wind, breath, spirit
Genesis 1:1-2 NAU - "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters."
 2. The Greek word πνεῦμα also means Spirit, Ghost, or breath, wind

3. Like the Father, the Holy Spirit exists without a body and without all the limitations of a body.
 4. Jesus is comparing the work of the Holy Spirit with the wind
John 3:8 NAU - "The wind (πνεῦμα) blows (πνέω) where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit (πνεῦμα)."
- C. We can see a similar analogy used to describe the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.
Acts 2:2 NAU - "And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind (πνοή), and it filled the whole house where they were sitting."
1. The event was described as a sound like a rushing wind
 2. It is reminiscent of the Ezekiel's prophecy of the dry bones.
Ezekiel 37:9 NAU - "Then He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath (רוּחַ), prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath (רוּחַ), 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Come from the four winds, O breath (רוּחַ), and breathe on these slain, that they come to life."
 KJV: "Prophecy to the wind"
7. Why does Jesus use the analogy of the wind in describing the work of the Holy Spirit to Nicodemus?
- I. It describes the invisible nature of the Holy Spirit effectually calling sinners to repentance
- A. Jesus describes the working of the Holy Spirit with the invisible action of the wind "do not know where it comes from and where it is going;"
1. Remember, the same word is used for both "wind" and "Spirit"
 2. As the wind blows through the trees we can't tell where it came from or where it's going. It moves invisibly. So it is with the working of the Holy Spirit. He moves mysteriously and invisibly.
 3. This would have been particularly true for Nicodemus lacking in the meteorological skills of today. The wind would have been mysterious and unpredictable.
- B. The work of the Holy Spirit is unseen in the sinner
1. Those whom God chose in eternity the Holy Spirit awakens to the Gospel. LBC 10:1 – "Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, he is pleased in his appointed, and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace."
 2. This means in evangelism we need to labor wisely and patiently allowing the Holy Spirit to do His perfect work. He works secretly and sovereignly upon the human heart, convicting of sin and awakening the sinner to see the glory of the Gospel.

3. We need to pray for discernment. It can be difficult for us to perceive what is happening in a sinner's heart.
How can we tell when the Holy Spirit is working?
4. It takes great patience and care to discern the true work of the grace of the Holy Spirit – the true work of regeneration.
- a. Jesus had perfect discernment—we can see this in the previous chapter.
John 2:23-25 NAU - "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, ²⁵ and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man."
 - b. Our discernment is not as astute.
 - The example of Demas who turned back because of his love for this world— did Paul perceive the hypocrisy of Demas before he turned away from the faith?
 - O Simon the Magician who Philip baptized but Peter recognized as having no part with them. Were there warning signs before Simon revealed his heart?
 - c. John warns, **1 John 2:19 NAU** - "They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."
 - d. Peter also gives a solemn warning:
2 Peter 2:20-22 NAS - "For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²² It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."
5. These warnings bear upon each of us to discern if we are in the faith—if we are regenerate. Has the Holy Spirit worked a work of grace within us?
2 Peter 1:8-10 NAU - "For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble"

II. It describes the work of the Holy Spirit as a sovereign work.

"The wind blows where it wishes"

A. The Holy Spirit moves as He wills

1. Nicodemus would have been an unlikely candidate for becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. He was one of the Pharisees, most likely seated on the Sanhedrin. He came at night to avoid raising suspicion. The Holy Spirit moved upon him infallibly and changed him. He became a follower of Christ while most of the Pharisees remained hardened in their sin.
2. All whom God has determined to save and for whom Christ died will in God's appointed time be effectually called by the Holy Spirit
3. In salvation God moves powerfully upon the heart of the sinner. He begins to convict him of his sin. God's condemnation weighs heavily. Through the quickening Spirit he sees his desperate need for Christ. The Spirit works within him faith and repentance.
4. All of this is according to God's supernatural, sovereign will, purpose, and work. Only God can save a sinner.
5. The Bible states "You must be born again" but it never tells us *how* to be born again. This is because the new birth is a sovereign action of God who moves when and how He pleases.
 - a. The Bible tells sinners how to be saved by turning from their sin and trusting Christ. The new birth makes this possible.
 - b. Sinners are not told to seek the new birth but to seek Christ.

B. As Christians, we sow the Gospel far and wide

1. We share Christ with compassion and with passion
We do not have the ability to change hearts. We can't cause the Holy Spirit to do His work. He works when and how he pleases.
2. We have no right to manipulate. We have no right to presume upon the work of the Holy Spirit. God must work infallibly.
John 6:44 NAU - "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."
Romans 9:15-16 NAS - "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶ So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy."
3. No one can harness the wind. No one can command the wind to blow. We can observe the movement of a hurricane by measuring the force of the wind but we cannot stop it; nor can we create it. Just as no one can tell the wind when to blow, it is also impossible to manipulate how the Holy Spirit works in the salvation of men. We cannot *cause* the new birth.
4. This knowledge of the action of the Holy Spirit increases our confidence in evangelism. It is not our work but God's work that leads to the transformation of the lost man. The Gospel is not about what we do but about what God does.

- III. The blowing of the wind also describes the outward visible result of the Holy Spirit's inward work.
- A. Although we cannot see the wind we can see evidence that it was there
1. How can you tell that a windstorm has swept through a town? You can see the outward visible evidence. Trees uprooted and homes damaged.
 2. How can we tell that the Holy Spirit has done a work of grace in the human heart? We can see the evidence
Matthew 13:23 NAU - "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."
 - a. With the inward work of the Holy Spirit there will be conviction of sin and Biblical repentance.
1 Thessalonians 1:5 NAU - "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction"
 - b. There will be the outward display of holiness.
Galatians 5:22-23 NAU - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."
 - c. There will be a love for Christ
1 Peter 1:8-9 NAU - "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,⁹ obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."
- B. Jesus is describing the invisible work of the Holy Spirit bringing people into His Kingdom
1. The Kingdom of God is an invisible Kingdom but it is manifested visibly.
 2. Although it is a spiritual kingdom it has visible living subjects.
 Jesus Christ is reigning in the hearts of His people and through the church
 3. God is mysteriously adding to His Kingdom. We cannot see His work but we can see the fruit of it.

Conclusion:

1. The Holy Spirit works invisibly and yet, powerfully. He is the surest evidence that we are the children of God. The presence of the indwelling Spirit distinguishes us from the unconverted.
Jude 1:19-21 NAU - "These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life."
Romans 8:9 NAU - "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."
2. The Holy Spirit is the source of power for us to live as Christians in hope and joy
Romans 15:13 NAU - "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

3. It reminds us how helpless we were to save ourselves. What distinguishes those in heaven and those in hell? Are the redeemed more intellectually astute, more spiritually aware, more morally worthy? To what can we credit being brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. How is it that we experienced this new birth? Only by the mysterious working of the quickening Spirit who moves invisibly according to His sovereign grace. LBC 10:2 – “This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit; he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, and that by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.”
4. How should we respond to this mystery? His work in us results in great gratitude and overwhelming praise.