

“The Necessity of the New Birth”

John 3:1-21

Sunday, March 5, 2018

Introduction: The Bible teaches us, encourages us, and comforts us. There is no book like the Bible, but the Bible does not flatter us. If you take seriously what the Bible says, you see quickly that the Bible is not a book to flatter you.

- The Bible says, “The heart of man is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9). Now that is not very flattering.
- The Bible says, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). That is not flattering.
- The Bible says, “There is no one who seeks God” (Romans 3:11). That is not flattering.
- The Bible says, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). There is nothing flattering in that statement.

We are all fallen and imperfect by nature. This is the lesson Jesus wanted to get across to a man named Nicodemus who believed the opposite. Nicodemus was rich, respected, and religious, but obviously lacked something in his life that he thought maybe the teacher and miracle worker from Nazareth could give him some insights. Nicodemus put his pride in his pocket and sought a private time with Jesus.

Text: John 3:1-21

1. Many people have confidence in their flesh that they will go to heaven.

- The apostle Paul had confidence in his flesh until he met Jesus on the Damascus road (Acts 9).
- Nicodemus had confidence in his flesh until he met Jesus (John 3).

- If anyone among the Jews thought they were a candidate for heaven it was Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee. He was a member of the Sanhedrin. He was born in the chosen Nation—Israel. He was circumcised on the eighth day. Nicodemus was like the apostle Paul until he met Jesus His confidence was in his flesh (Philippians 3:4).
- Fast forward to our day. Many people have confidence in their flesh that they will go to heaven.

Illustration: I must bring up a subject that you do not want to think about or hear about—physical death.

- You will physically die. The Bible says so.
- You do not know when you will die. This is the problem.
- This came home to Dottie and to her family last week. Her brother Wayne, 69 years old, went to bed and unexpectedly died in his sleep.
- When Wayne was nine years old, he trusted Jesus and became a Christian.
- Wayne knew people in many circles of life. Many people Wayne knew are not Christians, but everybody who knew Wayne knew that he was a Christian.
- End of the story—Wayne went to heaven one day ahead of Billy Graham.
- But that is not really the end of the story. Wayne’s wife Susan, Daughters Ana and Rachel, grandchildren, his sister (Dottie), and all his family know where Wayne is.

Application: When you die, and you will, you want to know that you are going to heaven. You want your family to know without a doubt that you have gone to heaven.

T.S. This is what Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know. Nicodemus had confidence in his flesh, yet realized something was missing and hoped the miracle worker from Nazareth could tell him what it was. He was seeking.

2. Be sensitive to seeking people.

- To the people who knew Nicodemus he seemed to be living the good life.
- To Nicodemus he obviously felt something was missing or would not have gone to Jesus.
- Inwardly Nicodemus knew there was more to life than what he had.
- He hoped Jesus could help him know what it was.
- Nicodemus began his conversation with Jesus with a statement (3:2).
- He did not understand Jesus' reply (3:3).
- Notice that he did not ask Jesus *why*. He asked Jesus *how*.
- Then Jesus told Nicodemus *how* (3:3-7).

One thing for sure about what Jesus was talking about in these verses is that He was not talking about Christian baptism. Jesus had not instituted the ordinance of baptism nor would he do so for several years. Another thing for sure is that Nicodemus was familiar with John the Baptist words, "I indeed baptize with water, but there comes one who will baptize you with the Spirit" (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8).

- John the Baptist baptism was for repentance and cleansing. The religious leaders, Nicodemus being one of them, so no need of repentance.

- Jesus brought Nicodemus back to John the Baptist baptism and said unless you come by repentance “water” and respond to regeneration “born of the Spirit” you cannot enter the kingdom of God.
- No repentance, no regeneration means no rebirth.
- Jesus was sensitive to Nicodemus seeking.

Application: Be sensitive to people who are seeking. Don’t expect non-Christians think, act, and talk like Christians. Be sensitive to opportunities to share about the difference being born again makes.

Conclusion: What about you? Have you been born again? Is your confidence in going to heaven in the flesh? How can you know? Let me give you three questions to ask yourself that will help you know.

1. Do you live like a person who has been born again?
2. Have your desires changed? When you are born again, you hate things you once loved, and you love things you used to not care much about.
3. Do you feel a life within you that you once did not feel?