

Born of God
John 1:13

In today's study, I want us to consider one of the most commonly used expressions in our Christian faith, the expression, "born again", "born again". I know that each of us is so familiar with the expression that it would seem that we could just pass right on by it. But folks we really must not.

As we make our journey through this Book of John, we'll need to examine in detail as many of God's truths as we possibly can. And that is especially so with God's command to us that we must be "born again".

Pause with me and let's read some of these beginning words given here in the Book of John. Here in verses 12 and 13 we read,

¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.(John 1:12-13)

Besides being one of the most used expressions when describing our Christian faith, these words, this saying, "born again", is also one of the most maligned sayings in our Christian faith. It's a description that seems often to be used in a negative way, especially by the broadcast media when they want to discredit Christians or to discredit the Christian faith. And of late, with so much of our culture becoming politically motivated, Christians are often called "born again right-wing radicals".

But even though to some people these words "born again" may be "cuss words", to us who believe, "born again" must be the unwavering, resolute truth of our life, or else we will never be able to see the Kingdom of God. That truth given to us clearly in John chapter 3 where,

³ . . . Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3)

And here in our scripture passage for today, that same declaration is being made. Listen again to these words.

¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural

descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.(John 1:12-13)

Yes, as verse 13 tells us, you and I, are at first born of natural descent, born of the will of man. But God is here declaring that our "flesh and blood birth" is not enough, that merely being born does not entitle anyone an entrance into heaven.

Folks, while these words are not meaningful to you and to me, to the people of Hebrew descent, this was of very great concern. The Israelites believed very strongly that because they were descendants of Abraham, their bloodlines would assure them of eternal salvation.

And sadly, even some of the religious leaders of our own day teach some of those same kinds of errant doctrines, suggesting that most everyone will eventually be allowed into the kingdom of God. But folks, that just is not so.

God has a firm prerequisite before He will allow anyone entrance into His kingdom! His prerequisite is, "Ye must be born again"!

Nicodemus, a man of that day that we'll read about in a later chapter of this Book of John, was a teacher of the law. And though he also believed in the bloodline heritage of the Jewish race, he seemed also to know that there was still something that was missing within his soul.

And because of that, he came to Jesus to ask Him about his concerns. And without hesitation, Jesus spoke those words in John chapter 3, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

That short conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus was probably one of the most significant conversations in all of scripture. The words that Jesus spoke back to Nicodemus were absolute and unwavering truth.

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Those are such simple words, but those words are not easily understood when only using common human rationale! They have some of the same confusing elements as did many of Jesus' parables.

And it wasn't because of a lack of intellect that Nicodemus reacted in the way that he did. He was a learned man, a scholar, schooled in the laws and the traditions of the Jewish faith.

But Jesus' words were not mere words. They are special words, words that fit under that special definition that Jesus gave in John chapter 6 when He said, "The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life."

These words were in every sense one of those "hard sayings" of Jesus, hard for the human intellect to comprehend. You and I have been hearing them all of our lives. And we know the context with which Jesus used them. Our preachers and our teachers have used them over and over again and explained them thoroughly. And more importantly, you and I have the Holy Spirit to interpret these words.

But that wasn't so with Nicodemus. Nicodemus had no such preachers and teachers and the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, so he was legitimately confused.

Jesus knew all of that, and He also knew just who He had in front of Him. So He addressed the problem immediately. And note carefully here Jesus' choice of words. "Except a man be born again, he cannot "see" the kingdom of God."

The word "see" not only implies the ability to enter into the kingdom of God. But it also means even the ability "to perceive" or to "be aware" that there even is such a thing as a "Kingdom of God".

The "total depravity" that is born into every person's soul at birth leaves them completely unaware of the things of God. In other words, except a person be "born again" they are not even aware that there is such a thing as a real "Kingdom of God."

To someone who is not "born again" the kingdom of God is, at most, just some mystical place that might be out there somewhere in another realm, sometime in the future. And that is true. But for those who are "born again" the "Kingdom of God" becomes an immediate reality . . . now . . . in this life.

When Jesus came to earth, He brought the "Kingdom of God" with Him. He is Immanuel, "God with us". And while we will certainly more fully enter into His kingdom after we die, that kingdom truly does begin here and now.

Everyone that is "born again of God", has a special presence of the Spirit of God in them and is able to enjoy many of the benefits of the Kingdom of God here and now, every day.

But those who are not "born again" do not. They live and have their daily being within the "darkness of the world", blinded to the "Kingdom of God" that exists all around them. Strangely, they can walk each day among believers, and they can see the benefits that believers enjoy, but still not truly "see" the Kingdom of God.

That is why Jesus could say those words, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Sadly, Nicodemus, and most all of his fellow Pharisees, were face to face with the "Kingdom of God", but were ignorant to its very existence.

But, thanks be to God, even in his ignorance, Nicodemus somehow knew that this strange young man in front of him had answers that he needed.

But how would he have known. What was it that would have taken place within Nicodemus that would have caused Him to be drawn to Jesus to ask the questions he was asking.

The answer to that question is found in the mysterious working that God's Holy Spirit does within the hearts of men and women. The words of the Lord Jesus in John chapter 6 verse 44 are clear. There Jesus said, "no one can come to me except my Father draws them". Nicodemus was mysteriously drawn to the Lord Jesus by God the Father.

And yes, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and God the Lord Jesus all knew their part within this plan of salvation. And so, without hesitation, Jesus cut right through all of the extra conversation and got immediately to the necessary point. He said, "Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Sometimes, perhaps often, our intellect and our years of education can get in the way of simple acceptance of a truth. And that seemed to be so with Nicodemus as he struggled to understand the words that Jesus was saying to him.

Again, he had been taught in the best of schools. He had rational comprehension, but these words that Jesus was using were not rational. They were even contrary to normal, rational thought. And so, Nicodemus said to Jesus, "wait just a moment! How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

It's interesting that Jesus is able to provoke such questions as this. Nicodemus needed to be able to comprehend beyond the physical aspects of being "born again".

And so, Jesus provoked his question. "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

And then Jesus was immediately able to push past the physical into the Spiritual, past the natural into the supernatural, and He answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

And notice here also the emphatic manner with which Jesus gives this statement. There is no "if" involved. There is only an emphatic "ye must be born again".

The emphasis is especially evident in the King James Version in the words "verily, verily", or "most assuredly", Amen, Amen!

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, are the words used most often by Jesus to emphasize that there are no other means, no other methods, no other options possible. And so it is also with our salvation, and with our eternal life. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Ye must be born again.

Here in John chapter 1 verse 13, that same message is being given. We, you and I, must be

¹³ . . . born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:13)

These words, "born again", "born of God", "born of the Spirit" are a condition of the soul that must take place, no "ifs" and no other options.

What does it mean exactly, to be "born again" to be "born of God"?

To be "born again" means that we pass from death into life. There is an inescapable condition of our soul that we are born with, a totally depraved sinful nature that controls every thought and every action of our heart and mind. In so many ways, it's akin to those demonically evil terrorists that plague our society today.

They will have their way. There is no negotiating, no reasoning. They know only self and the desires of self and they will have nothing less.

And so it is with every human soul that is born on this earth. Not to the extent that the terrorists go to, but all the same, we will have our way. There is no negotiating, no reasoning. We know only self and the desires of self and we will have nothing less.

Our Lord tells us that clearly in Romans chapter 3. There we are told, There is no one righteous, not even one;

- ¹¹ there is no one who understands,
no one who seeks God.
- ¹² All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one." (Romans 3:10-12)

Folks, there is no wonder that God has said that such sinfulness can never enter into His kingdom!

The only solution to such a wretched condition is for that nature to die and a new nature to be born within our souls.

To the human intellect, these words are as strange and confusing as Jesus' words were to Nicodemus. And just like Nicodemus, we instinctively ask, "But how is it possible to die and yet stay alive"?

Often our first thought is that this is a symbolic thing, a metaphor, an analogy, but folks, it is not. I can't be more emphatic. This is no metaphor. This is not just some symbolic gesture. This must be real. Jesus said in John 12

²⁴I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:24-25)

Oh dear friends, these words are not just symbolic. They are in every way real.

At one of those mysteriously orchestrated moments, God provokes our hearts to understand. And in that special moment our minds, our hearts, our souls are "quickened", made alive, and we suddenly see with a "light" that we have never seen before.

And at that moment, by an act of faith, our hearts mysteriously respond to God's inspiration within our soul, and everything within us changes, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and we are then forever different.

From these words given to us here in verse 12, we know that it is all an indivisible two part decision, the first part being as God quickens us, making us "alive" and then drawing us to Him. The other part, you and me "believing in Him" and by a conscious and deliberate act of our faith "receiving Him" into our heart and soul. But all of it is enabled by the Grace and Mercy of God.

And the result is, we are "born again", "born of God". Suddenly and surely, our old self, the power and the control of our sin nature dies within us and we pass from that all-consuming death of self into a new and wondrous life with Christ.

Jesus said in John chapter 5,

²⁴Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)

There is a mystery to the “new birth” and it will forever remain a mystery, known only within the realms of God. But we don’t have to be able to fathom the mystery. We need only to by faith accept it.

If we do that, then in only a moment, we will be forever changed, never to be the same again, no longer controlled by the sin nature that once lived in us, tempted yes, tempted often, yes, but no longer controlled.

That precious assurance given to us in Romans chapter 8. Listen!

⁹You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. (Romans 8:9)

When a soul is born of God, it is immediately filled with the presence of God’s Holy Spirit and from that moment forward, God’s Spirit is forever convicting, convincing, shining the light of truth on every matter.

There is truly “new life” in the soul that has been “born again”. We think differently, we act differently and we will have an eternity with God in the Kingdom of heaven.

Everyone “born again of God” becomes a “son of God”, able to enjoy all of the joys and benefits of being His son, “gifts from the Spirit” and “fruits of the Spirit”, the indescribable joy of being able to truly love others, your wife, your husband, your children, your neighbor, even your enemy, and so much, much more.

Jesus said, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”

Listen again to these precious words and we’ll close . . .

¹². . . to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. (John 1:12-13)

Pray with me!