

Nick Davis - 22 August 2021

(Sermon Summary)

You must be born again

Reading: John 3:1-9

Jesus said to Nicodemus “Except a man be born, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:9). What did Jesus mean, and how can we be born of the Spirit?

In verse 3, Jesus answered a question that Nicodemus had not asked! As the omniscient God, Jesus knew what was in Nicodemus’s heart and mind. Jesus saw the insecurity of this outwardly religious man. Nicodemus knew all the correct doctrines, but doctrine has no power to save unless we know the God of the doctrines. Nicodemus had no assurance that the things he did would give him eternal life.

All religions tell us to do good works to make us acceptable to God but Jesus dashed all Nicodemus’s hopes. It doesn’t matter how hard you try to be righteous, you are still dead in your sins, and nothing you do can please God. If even the religious Pharisees were dead, what hope was there for the common man, and what hope is there for us?

The need to be born from above

We have forgotten how radical the Fall was: many churches underplay it by saying people are just “wounded”. Adam and Eve both died spiritually as soon as they sinned, and this spiritual deadness is passed down to us all. Humanity was separated from God, and our nature became hostile to God. We became evil at the Fall (John 3:19-20). We traded the truth of God for a lie (Romans 1:25), making false gods for ourselves. All of us are like this prior to being saved: there is no-one that seeks God (Romans 3:12). We do not have a “God-shaped hole” in our hearts, or any desire to seek God. What we need is a new heart. Preachers should not whip up emotions in order to convince people to make a ‘decision’ for Christ - those ‘converts’ can easily be convinced out of it again! Instead, we need God to intervene.

Made alive by the Spirit of God

We are as dead as Lazarus in the tomb, or the dry bones in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezekiel 37:1-14). We need to be made alive by the Spirit in order to want God. Ephesians 2:1-6 describes how we were dead in our sins before being born again. If we are in Christ, God has intervened and we have been made alive, because of His great love. When he quickens us, we see the pit of sin that we are in and we will run to Christ and throw ourselves on His mercy. If we have come to Christ, we have certainty of salvation. Amazing grace! - how can we not be a people of joy? God is at work in the Gospel, the power of God to salvation (Romans 1:16).

Have we been born again?

We must examine ourselves. God commands all men to repent (Acts 2:38). If we have repented and are trusting in Christ, we have been born of God. We need to be living a life of daily repentance, wanting to submit to the law of God. We should not content ourselves with the fact that we will never be perfect in this life, but should grieve over our sins. If we do not have this attitude, we should question whether we are really born again.

No-one can say "Jesus is Lord" but by the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 12:3). This does not mean merely saying the words, but acknowledging the lordship of Christ and being submitted to Him. If you are doing this, it is a sign that you are born of the Spirit.

If you haven't repented and are outside of Christ, you are appointed to die, and after this the judgement (Hebrews 9:27). Don't delay! God commands you to repent, and all who come to Him He will in no way cast out (John 6:37).

With Charles Wesley we can say "Finish then Thy new creationtill in Heaven we take our place" (*Love divine, all loves excelling*). We will cast our crowns before Him as we acknowledge that He has done everything for our salvation.