

Born Again!

The Miracle of New Spiritual Life

Church January 15, 2023

Part 3- The *Need* for the New Birth- *Continued*

1Peter 1:3-9

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

8 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.

*To the Glory of God the Holy Father; God the Holy Son; and God the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

There are three great Commands in the Bible that God has *imposed* on all of Mankind:

1. To love God with all your Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength
2. To love your Neighbor as *yourself*
3. To be Holy for God is Holy

Now it is true that there are several other things that God has *required* from us such as to be Righteousness; and to Joy in God; and to Obey God's

Commandments, etc. But I would suggest that these other Issues flow out from either our Love *for* God or our effort to be Holy.¹

Now *normally* when we talk about Salvation- we are talking about what God has *saved* us; or *rescued* us; or *delivered* us; or *healed* us *FROM*- namely the Wrath of God; Hell; everlasting Torment; eternal Damnation, etc. And we rejoice that, in His Mercy and by His Grace and to His Own Glory- God saw fit to save us from His Own terrifying Wrath- that we have *earned*; and that we *deserve* because of our many Sins. And that is truly something to rejoice about.

But we normally don't discuss very much or very often- what we have been saved *FOR*; or *UNTO*- and I *don't* mean Heaven. The Bible teaches *repeatedly* that we have been reconciled to God *Himself* (**Romans 5:10; 2Corinthians 5:20**). Now I certainly believe in Heaven and I plan to spend all of Eternity there. But what about being *reconciled*; or *saved*- to God Himself? To just God? And that Concept gives us a different Perspective about WHY God saved us. And it is to *glorify* God; and bring Honor to Him- in ALL that we think; and say and do. And that means now- on this earth- *before* we do that in Heaven.

So, I would suggest that we really need to think *more* about what God has saved us *FOR*- because- unless we are saved on our Death-bed- we will spend the overwhelming *majority* of our Lives- AFTER we have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth. And if all God was interested in doing was to rescue us from His Wrath and take us to Heaven- then why doesn't God do that- immediately after we are Born Again; Justified; and Adopted? But, manifestly, He doesn't. He leaves most of us here- to battle our Flesh and to make War against the World and the devil.

So, *why* do we spend years- even *decades* of our Lives- in the Part of Salvation called, "*Sanctification*"² if it is true that all God was interested in doing with us was to deliver us from Hell and bring us into Heaven?

For example, when Jesus taught us how to pray over in **Matthew 6** and **Luke 11**- He began by telling us that it was important to pray like this:

Hallowed be Your Name

Now keep in mind, that the Reason Jesus is teaching them (and us) how to pray- was because the Apostles *watched* Jesus as He talked with His Father. He got up early and stayed up late- talking to His Father. And sometimes- Jesus would pray all night long. They had never seen anyone talk to God the way Jesus spoke with His Father. Certainly NOT the Pharisees. But not even their own earthly fathers talked to God like this- and they sure didn't.

¹ Holiness is NOT the same thing as Righteousness. Holiness is the State of being uniquely "set aside" for God's Use and God's Glory; while Righteousness is the derivative or the Result of our Obedience.

² Please refer to the Teaching on the "*Ordo Salutis*" (the Order of Salvation) on the Church Website: www.covenantofpeace.net

But these men watched how Jesus got up from praying and they saw how He *interacted* with both Sinners that He would save; and Sinners He would NOT save. And then they watched Him do all that He did- and these chosen men wanted that kind of Relationship with God. And so, they asked Him,

Lord, teach us to pray... (Luke 11:1)

Now I have mentioned this many times throughout my Ministry- but the Prayer that Jesus taught in **Matthew 6** and **Luke 11** is NOT the “*Lord’s Prayer*”. The “*Lord’s Prayer*” is over in **John 17**. That is the Prayer that Jesus Himself prayed. What Jesus is doing in **Matthew 6** and elsewhere is teaching them (and us) how WE are supposed to pray. But even at that- this Prayer is NOT merely a collection of religious sounding Words that we are supposed to memorize and then repeat over and over- thinking that the MORE we repeat these words- something magical will happen to us.³ In **Matthew 6:7&8** Jesus said,

7... when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

8 "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

When Jesus gave us the Instruction on how to pray in **Matthew 6**- He began that Instruction by saying this in **Matthew 6:9a**:

Pray, then, in this way:

... which in the original Greek reads, “*after this Manner- pray.*”

In other words, we are to pray- AFTER THIS MANNER- *not* merely repeat these words. Another way of understanding this is to say that the Subjects or the Issues that Jesus deals with- in that Teaching are the Subjects and the Issues that matter the MOST to God. And so, Jesus wants them to matter the MOST to *us*.

So, rather than merely repeat these words (*especially* when we don’t really understand why Jesus told us to pray about these Issues)- we are to use our own Language; our own Terminology; our own Logic; our own Earnestness; our own Passion; and our own Desperation and we are to ask God about the nine- or so- separate Issues or Subjects that Jesus covered in that Instruction on Prayer.

³ This “**meaningless Repetition**” occurs most frequently in our day in the “**Rite of Penance**” in the Roman religious System as they instruct people to say, five “*our Fathers*” or five “*Hail Marys*” thinking that by merely repeating this Prayer five times- God will look “Bad” if He doesn’t forgive them. This makes a mockery of genuine Repentance and Prayer.

Now this is NOT me simply splitting hairs here. I honestly believe that MOST people miss the entire Point of what Jesus was teaching here by thinking we are supposed to memorize these Words and then repeat them- rather than actually crying out to God about the various Issues that matter the MOST to God.

And the Proof that I'm speaking Truth here is in how little the average Prayers of the average Believer resemble anything *remotely* close to the Issues that Jesus told us to talk to God about here.

But after Jesus taught us to talk to God about Him being our Father (rather than merely a generic "god" like the pagans) and that this Father was in Heaven- Jesus told us to ask God a very strange thing. He told us to ask God...

Hallowed be Your Name

So, Jesus tells us here that we are to ask God to *hallow*; or to *sanctify*; or to *make holy*; or to *reverence*; or to *venerate*; or to *make sacred*- His Own Name; or His Own Reputation; or His Own Integrity. Why? Why does God need *us* to ask Him to do what He has *repeatedly* said in Scripture He wants to do anyway?

You see, the Bible teaches from cover to cover that God is white-hot in His Desire that EVERYTHING He does and EVERYTHING He speaks- is carried out for one overarching Reason: So, that God will be glorified. EVERYTHING God does- is done to His Own Glory⁴. And God doesn't do *anything* that is contrary to His Glory. So, the Glory of God is the primary Issue with God. And it is the Catalyst; the Cause; and the Reason behind why God does ALL that He does.

So, *why* does Jesus want us to ask God to hallow His Name- when EVERYTHING God already does- is to that one single End? Are we to assume that God might NOT hallow His Own Name- unless we ask Him to do so? Is that *why* we are told to ask Him to do that?

And *why* is this the very *first* Request we are supposed to ask God to do? Because, according to Jesus, asking God to hallow His Own Name comes *before* asking God to *forgive* us; or to *provide* for us; or to *heal* us; or to *help* us. So, us praying to God, in the Name of Jesus, and in the Power of the Holy Spirit- for God to *hallow* His Own Name- is the most *important* and the most *primary* Prayer that ALL Believers should ask- even though it probably isn't looked at like that by very many. And so, my Question is, "*Why?*" *Why* is us asking God to hallow His Own Name so important to God?

Now in my own Journey into believing what the Bible teaches about the Sovereignty of God- this represented the *first* Area that presented a Problem to me. If God is absolutely Sovereign over everything- all the time- then *why* does God

⁴ Two other ways this is described in the Bible is for God to say that ALL He does is "*for His Name's Sake*" or "*So they will know there is none like Me in all the earth.*"

need me to ask Him to do what He has already said in His Word- He is going to do? In other words, why does God need my “two-cents”? And the Answer is this:

God has determined that He will do ALL that He does in the earth- by answering the Prayers of His people.

Now most of us already know that the ONLY Prayers that God answers- are the Prayers that are in accord with His Will (**1John 5:14**). So, God NEVER answers Prayers that are in *opposition* to; or in *rebellion* to- His Will. So, part of the Reason God gave us the “*Means of Grace*” called, “*Prayer*” is to teach us how to submit ourselves- *gladly*- to the Will of God. And to be so transformed (by what God alone does for us)- that the ONLY thing we *want*; and the ONLY thing we *ask for*- is the Will of God! And I suggest to you that this is what the New Birth is all about.

Now the ONLY Way we know what God’s Will is- is by reading and studying (and correctly interpreting) God’s Word. So, we must pray “in accord with” God’s written Word- which IS the revealed Will of God. And this is what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote this in

Ephesians 6:18:

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints

... so, praying “**in the Spirit**” is NOT about “*speaking or praying in tongues*” as those in the Pentecostal Movement are taught.

“Praying in the Spirit” is about us praying or asking God “in accord with” the PRODUCT of God the Holy Spirit- which is the written Word of God- the Scriptures.

Now even though that’s true- it still seems strange. *Why* does God want me to pray and ask Him to do something that His Word has already told me He wants to do? Because God has established the Way or the Manner in which He will move in the earth. And it is in answering the Prayers of His people. And, according to His Word- God desires to do much in the earth. And that means I have much to pray about. And THAT is part of why God saved us- so God will move in the earth- in the way He has already told us (in His Word) He desires to move- by answering our Prayers.

So, one of the Reasons God leaves us here on earth and doesn’t take us into Heaven immediately after we have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth- is so we would pray in accord with God’s Will.

So, we are to read and study God's written Word so that we will KNOW what the Will of God (about a particular Subject) is. And then we are to *joyfully* submit ourselves to the Will of God; and we are to genuinely want (desire) that Will; and we are to then ask Him to do what He says in His Word- He already desires to do. And then we may be *assured* that God will move (in His Timing).

Okay, but what about Subjects and Issues that the Bible is silent about? We must pray and be humble enough to say something to the effect- "*If it be Your Will...please do this or that.*" Why? Because we do not know what God's Will is- concerning that particular Issue.

For example, we see our Nation becoming more ungodly and more pagan every hour. And we don't want that to happen. So, we ask God to *rescue* us from this terrible Collapse. But we really don't know what God's Will is- concerning the United States. Is it God's Will to restore our Nation? I sure hope so- but I don't know. It may be God's Will to use the Collapse of the United States as a Warning to other Nations to repent so this very same moral Collapse won't happen to them. But I hope it *may* be God's Will to use the Threat of Collapse as the Catalyst to bring about another Great Awakening that will bring about a wholesale Repentance that God will be merciful and *reverse* our slide into the Abyss.

We simply don't know. So, we pray; we beg God; and then we live our own Lives as though God will use us to bring about that great Awakening. But we must understand that simply because something looks or sounds Good to us does not mean it is God's Will.

Okay, but what happens if we DON'T pray in accord to what God has revealed in His Word that is His Will? The Bible teaches that God has purposefully *limited* Himself to move in the earth- ONLY by answering the Prayers of His people. So, if we do NOT pray- God will NOT move- even though His Word says He *desires* to do certain things. BUT- because it is God's Will to do certain things- God will "see to it"- that His people pray in accord with His Will! So, God will sovereignly "lay a heavy Burden" on the minds and hearts of His people- to *compel* them to pray in accord with His will – so He may graciously move in the earth by answering the Prayers of His people.

For example, in **The Revelation 22:20b**, Jesus said,

... Yes, I am coming quickly...

So, at this point- we now know that it is the Will of God for Jesus to come quickly. Now we have to define the term, "Quickly" as it pertains to a Being, Who is called, the "**Ancient of Days**" (**Daniel 7:9,13, &22**). But nevertheless- God has clearly revealed His Will right here that Jesus is going to return to this earth- quickly. So, now we all know the Will of God concerning Jesus' 2nd Coming.

But what did the Apostle John do in *response* to learning what the Will of God is- concerning the 2nd Coming of Jesus to this earth? Did he say, “*Well, this is a done deal and I’m going to just wait for it to happen?*” No, John prayed this at the end of **The Revelation 22:20**:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Now *why* did John pray this way? Jesus has just told John what His Will was- concerning His Return to this earth. So, doesn’t that mean it is *guaranteed*? I mean God is Sovereign and it is God’s Will for Jesus to come back quickly. So, that is that, right? Jesus WILL come back quickly- *precisely* because that is God’s Will and God is Sovereign. So, we don’t have to worry about it- right?

But John understood that God will ONLY move in the earth by answering the Prayers of His people. So, AFTER John heard Jesus tell him that it was His Will to come back to this earth, quickly- John prayed,

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

... and we should mirror that Prayer as well.

So, rather than take this Statement by Jesus as Cause to relax and just wait on it- John took it up as a matter of Prayer. And that means that we should *continually* ask God to send Jesus back- quickly. Why? Because that is God’s Will.

So, instead of trying to figure out all of the Issues that are going on today that people tell us are Signs of the 2nd Coming- we should simply ask God to send Jesus back- quickly. Because while *some* or *many* of the Interpretations of those “Signs” may be way off base- and while *some* might not even be true; and while *some* might not have ANYTHING to do with Jesus coming back- we already know for sure- that it is God’s Will for Jesus to come back quickly- because He said so- right here. So, as bond-slaves of Jesus- we are to pray in accord with what we know to be God’s Will. Why? Because God will ONLY move in the earth by answering the Prayers of His people.

So, when Jesus told us to pray,

Hallowed be Your Name

... He *expects* us to pray to that End- because we now know that this is *part* of God’s Will. And since God will NOT move in the earth except by answering the Prayers of His people- God’s Name will NOT be hallowed except and unless and until God’s people pray to that End.

But because it *is* God's Will to hallow His Own Name- God will "see to it" that His people pray this way. And that is one reason *why* God burdened my heart to put this in my Sermon this morning. Because even though we may not know *all* that we *should* know- we now know how to pray about God hallowing His Name. And we also know that we are *guaranteed* that God will move in accord with that Prayer- and that God will hallow His Own Name- because we also know that this is God's Will.

Now remember that ONLY saved people pray this way. So, ONLY those who have already *experienced* the Miracle of the New Birth; and have become part of the Christian Church pray this way. And that means that God- hallowing His Own Name- is a vital part of the Mission of Christ's Church in the earth- until Jesus comes back. And that means that at least ONE reason why we are left on earth after we are born again- is so that we would pray that God would hallow His Name. In other words, us praying that God would hallow His Name is one thing we have been born again- FOR.

Now what would that actually look like? Well, we are to ask God that in *all* that we believe; in *all* that we think; in *all* that we say; and in *all* that we do- in the earth- AFTER we have been born again- that He would empower and enable us to do all things- to God's Glory; or to the *hallowing* of God's Name in the earth!

So, until ALL that we do; and say; and think; is to hallow God's great Name; and until that one single Goal permeates throughout the entire world- we need to pray this Prayer. To what End? Until the Mission of the Church is complete and...

... the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9b)

And this has to do with the Parable of the Mustard Seed. In **Matthew 13:31&32**- Jesus said,

**31 ..."The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;
32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."**

Now this is a very important Parable that helps us understand the Kingdom of Heaven. And it is so Important that pieces of this Parable were first given to the Prophets Daniel (**Daniel 4:12**) and Ezekiel (**Ezekiel 17:23**) almost 600 years

before Jesus was born. And then another piece was given to the psalmist (**Psalm 104:12**).

And the *Essence* of this Parable is that the Kingdom of Heaven begins on the earth as a very small and insignificant Entity- barely recognizable. But unlike any other seed- this divine “Seed” *continues* to grow; and continues to expand; and, over a long period of time- it takes in more and more people; and more and more areas of this Life.

And this Seed NEVER stops growing. It NEVER ceases to expand. And it can NEVER be defeated. It is relentless. It is undefeatable. And the end Result is that before Jesus returns- what started out as a small insignificant Seed will be a giant Tree- that is able for the birds of the sky to build a nest in it!

Now today, *especially* here in the United States, we see great Compromise; great Apostasy; and great Sin in the American Church. And we grieve over the Wickedness that seems to gain ground every moment- with little or no Resistance. So, it appears that satan is winning; Sin is ascending; and Godliness is waning and disappearing.

But we must take heart, dear friends, and remember that God is absolutely Sovereign over everything- all the time! And that tiny little mustard Seed that began in a Prayer Meeting with 120 scared people in the Upper Room over 2,000 years ago- is *relentlessly* and irresistibly growing. It is *relentlessly* getting larger and larger- spreading its branches over *more* and *more* territory; overshadowing *more* and *more* people.

So, today- in spite of all the Evil that is going on- the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being preached *more* often; to *more* people than at any time in the History of the Church! *More* people today are hearing the Sound of Amazing Grace; and the Message of Salvation in Jesus than ever before! And it is also true that *more* people around the world today have access to a Bible than ever before! And the Scripture that says, “**Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ**” (**Romans 10:17**) is still true. And that means that as more people hear the Gospel- more people will believe; and more people will experience the Miracle of the New Birth!

Now it is also true that satan cannot stand to see God glorified. And so, there is also *more* Resistance and *more* Opposition to the Gospel than ever before. *More* people are fighting *harder* than ever to silence the Church than at any time in History. There is *more* Persecution; *more* Laws are being passed; *more* Governments are rising up to wage War against this ever-growing mustard Seed than at any time in human History. And *more* and *more* Pressure is being put on God’s people to still their Voices and discourage their Prayers than ever before.

And that means that we MUST be crystal clear about who we have believed in. And we must herald this glorious Gospel *louder* than ever- *completely*

unashamed and unafraid- to as many people as we can every day- using every means available! And instead of bemoaning the status of the American Church; or crouching in Fear; or giving up- we simply need to do what Daniel did- after he learned that it was against the Law to pray to God. In **Daniel 6:10** God's Word says,

...when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

So, when we are confronted or threatened- we need to trust in God; roll up our sleeves; get busy; and cry out to Him that His glorious Name will be hallowed! Because the Bible is crystal clear that it is God's Will to save ALL of His elect- BEFORE Jesus comes back! And in that way- God's great and holy Name will be hallowed! So, we should see all of this as one of the Reasons we have been born again FOR.

Now as you ponder this Mystery- I want to try to present to you exactly what happens to us as the Miracle of the New Birth comes to us in four concise Statements:

1. The New Birth is us *receiving* new, spiritual Life- NOT new Religion
2. The New Birth is us personally *experiencing* supernatural Transformation- NOT merely *believing* in it
3. It is in the New Birth where God give us the Gifts of Love and Faith
4. The New Birth does NOT make the "Old Man" *better*- it is the *creation* of a "New Man"

... and even though we won't finish this today- we *will* go a long ways into it.

Now over the last several weeks- I have tried to tell you that MOST of what you have been taught about the New Birth is either completely Wrong or woefully lacking. And one of the Areas that I want you to really try hard to grasp in this Series is WHY the New Birth MUST be a Miracle; and WHY this Miracle MUST be a sovereign Act of God alone. And it has to do with the Condition of your Nature BEFORE you have been born again. So, last week- I went into great detail about WHY we need to be born again.

And like I said before, everybody I have ever met says they believe that Mankind is "*Fallen*". And that term, "*Fallen*" has to do with our Condition since Adam "*Fell*" (Sinned) in the Garden. And the single word that Theologians use to describe our "*fallen*" Condition is: "*Depraved*".

And the Bible teaches *clearly* and *repeatedly* that our “Falleness” and our “Depravity” is “Total”. It is NOT *partial*. In other words, we are NOT just a *little bit* Fallen. We are not *partially* Depraved. We are NOT somewhat “Impaired”. And we are NOT merely “Hindered” as it pertains to God.

The Bible teaches that ALL of Humanity is TOTALLY Depraved. In other words, EVERY area of Human Existence- including our Will; our Choices; our Loves; our Desires; our Wants; as well as ALL of our Acts and Deeds- has been radically and negatively and completely RUINED by the Fall of Adam. In other words, there is NO area of Human Existence that was left intact after Adam sinned. And we need to remember that this is talking about “WHO we ARE”- and NOT merely “WHAT we DO”.

So, the insulting Reality is that in our natural and normal State of Being since the Fall of Adam in the Garden (some 6-10,000 years ago)- ALL of Mankind is now “ALL EVIL”- all the Time! **Genesis 6:5** sums it up better than almost any other verse when it says,

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Now the word, “**great**” in this verse means: “*all pervasive*”. So, there is NO area of Human Existence that is NOT Wicked. But the worst part is at the end that says,

... every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually
... EVERY Intent was ONLY Evil- *Continually*.

So, there is NO room in the lost human being for ANY Good- in a godly sense. None. There is NO Love for God at all. And there is absolutely NOTHING within the heart or mind of fallen Humanity that could, in any way, cause us to even *want* God. Our Plight after the Fall is that we are “**ALL Evil- ALL the Time!**” And that is why in **Romans 3:10,11,12b&18** the Holy Bible teaches,

... "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD... THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE... THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

.. and THAT is WHY the New Birth HAS to be a Miracle; and WHY it HAS to be a Sovereign Act of God alone.

We are so ruined; so depraved; so far away from God because of Adam's Sin- that we don't even have the Desire to initiate the New Birth much less the Power to do so.

So, that is the insulting and humiliating Reality of ALL of Humanity born of Woman after Adam sinned. And keep in mind- this is NOT talking about Mass Murders and Child Molesters. This is talking about EVERYBODY! This is talking about sweet little old ladies; and kindly neighbors; and sweet children; and thoughtful citizens, who have NOT been Born Again. So, not only is all of Humanity "Lost"; not only are we BORN "Lost"; but the Bible teaches that we are *so* "Lost"; *so* "Fallen"; *so* "Depraved" that we are ALL Evil- ALL the Time!

And that is WHY we can't just "choose" to be Born Again. This is why it is *so wrong*; *so misleading*; and *so confusing* to tell lost people to "*accept Jesus into their hearts*". People CANNOT believe in order to be Born Again. There is NO Desire and NO Ability to believe in our fallen State. We lost all of that- in the Fall. We MUST be powerfully; supernaturally; and miraculously Born Again- so we will have both the Ability (the Gift) and the Desire to Believe! So, this is where our great NEED to be born again comes from.

But before we get into just what happens to us in the New Birth- I beg you to hear my Heart. I am very cognizant of the fact that this Series of Messages is going to be very disturbing to some of you- not only because of the Reality that some of you have been taught very poorly or not at all about this Issue. But I am also aware that this is one of those Subjects in the Bible that seems to disturb people a lot.

When Jesus talked to a supposed "Expert" of the Old Testament Law- over in **John 3**- Nicodemus was NOT a "Happy Camper". And even though **John 3** is *universally* used to teach people how to lead others to Christ in Salvation- there is NOTHING in the verses of **John 3** itself that tells us that Nicodemus was saved at that point.

Now I believe that at the End- Nicodemus WAS saved- but not here in **John 3**. The Words of Jesus about the New Birth in **John 3** didn't do anything but tear Nicodemus apart. It did NOT comfort him; it did NOT encourage him; it did NOT make him warm and fuzzy. The Words of Jesus about the New Birth in **John 3** shook Nicodemus to his core. He was hearing the incarnate God tell him that EVERYTHING he had been doing his entire Life was a complete waste of time as far as gaining the Favor of God.

And I believe that these Words- when properly and fully understood- have been designed by God on purpose to tear us apart too. All half-Truths and all false Teaching about how lost people are born again will be systematically destroyed by simply hearing and believing what Jesus spoke in **John 3**. And there seems to be at least 3 reasons for this:

A. Our Hopeless Condition

Jesus's Teaching about the New Birth confronts us with our hopeless spiritual and moral and legal Condition apart from God's regenerating Grace. Before the New Birth happens to us, we are spiritually DEAD. We are morally Selfish and Rebellious. And no matter how hard we may have tried to be "Nice" or "Good"- the Truth is that before we are born again- we are legally Guilty before God's Law; and we are underneath His Wrath.

So, when Jesus tells us that we must be born again- He is telling us that our present Condition is hopelessly Unresponsive, Corrupt, and Guilty. And so, apart from the Miracle of amazing Grace in our lives- WE ARE DOOMED! No Hope! None- outside of Jesus! And Teaching like that is very disturbing.

But another part of being Lost is that we don't believe we are Lost. The spiritual Blindness that is over every single lost person's eyes and heart; and mind- is so pervasive; so powerful- that, absent a sovereign Act of God- we not only don't believe we are Lost- we think we are just fine! And so, without God's Grace- Satan uses our Lost Condition to *prevent* us from even seeing the Need for the New Birth (2Corinthians 4:4).

B. We CANNOT Cause the New Birth

Teaching about the New Birth is also disturbing because it refers to something that is done *TO* us and *FOR* us- and NOT something we do for ourselves. In fact, since the New Birth is the FIRST Act of God that is specifically done to us- without this Miracle- we can't even believe or love God. The first verse in the Passage that was read to us just now re-enforces this. The Apostle Peter said:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

So, we *do not* cause the New Birth- because we CAN'T. The Bible teaches that God sovereignly *causes* the New Birth. Any good thing that we do is a *Result* or a *Response* of the New Birth- NOT the *Cause* of it. And this means that the New Birth is taken completely out of our hands. It is NOT in our control. And so, it confronts us with our Helplessness and our absolute Dependence on Someone (namely, God) outside of ourselves.

And that is disturbing. We are told that we won't see the Kingdom of God if we're not born again. Yet we are also told that we can't make ourselves to be born again.

C. God is the ONLY One WHO is absolutely "Free"

Now this may seem strange to some. Why would the Knowledge that God is the ONLY Being in the Universe who is absolutely "Free" disturb us? But this third Reason Jesus's Teaching about the New Birth is disturbing is because it confronts us with the absolute Freedom of God. You see, apart from God, we are spiritually Dead in our Selfishness and Rebellion. We are "*by nature*" children of God's Wrath (**Ephesians 2:3**). Our Rebellion is so deep-seated that we cannot detect or desire the Glory of Christ in the Gospel (**2Corinthians 4:4**). Therefore, if we are going to be born again at all- it will rely *decisively* and *ultimately* on God. His Decision to "*make us alive*" is NOT a Response to something that we, as spiritual corpses do, or say, or ask *first*. But everything we do afterwards- is a Response to Him "*making us alive*". And, for most people, at least at first, this is very disturbing.

So, as I go deeper into this Series, I am aware of how disturbing this Teaching on the New Birth can be. And that is why I pray I am as careful as I can be. I do not want to cause tender souls any unnecessary Distress. And I do not want to give false Hope to those who have confused humanly engineered Morality or Man-made Religion for the Miracle of new, spiritual Life. So, please pray for me. I feel like I am taking eternal souls in my hands in these days. And yet I know that I have no Power in myself to give them Life. But God does.

And I am very hopeful that He will do what He says in **Ephesians 2:4&5**:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

God delights to magnify the Riches of His Life-giving Grace where Christ is lifted up in Truth. And that is my Hope: that this Series will not just disturb- but also stabilize and save. Okay, here goes:

1. The New Birth is us receiving new, spiritual Life- NOT new Religion

What happens in the New Birth is NOT us getting new Religion but receiving new, spiritual Life. Read with me **John 3:1-3**:

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The Apostle John makes sure that we know that Nicodemus is a Pharisee and a Ruler of the Jews. The Pharisees were the most rigorously Religious of all the Jewish groups. And yet, to this one, Jesus says (in verse 3),

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

... and even more personally in verse 7:

"You must be born again."

So, one of John's Points is: ALL of Nicodemus's Religion; ALL of his amazing Pharisaic Study and Discipline and Law-keeping, CANNOT fill the NEED he has for new, spiritual Life. Flesh CANNOT produce Spirit. So, at this point in his long life- Nicodemus is still spiritually Dead. And all that he has so faithfully carried out his entire Life simply illustrates his great NEED to be born again.

So, what Nicodemus needs, and what you and I need, is NOT Religion- but Life. And the Point of referring this Miracle as a "Birth" is that it brings a new Life- new spiritual Life into the world. Now in one sense- Nicodemus is very alive. He is breathing, thinking, feeling, and acting. He is every bit a Human, created in God's Image.

But Jesus says he's Dead. There is no spiritual Life in Nicodemus. At all. None. So, spiritually, he is entirely Unborn. And what he NEEDS- is Life- NOT more religious Activities or more religious Zeal. He already has plenty of that.

You recall what Jesus said in **Luke 9:60** to the man who wanted to put off following Jesus so he could bury his father? Jesus said, **"Allow the dead to bury their own dead"**. And that means there are physically dead people- who need burying. And there are also "spiritually dead" people who can bury them. In other words, Jesus thought in terms of people who walk around with much apparent Life, and yet are spiritually Dead. And in His Parable about the prodigal son, the Father says, **"This son of mine was *dead*, and has come to life again"** (Luke 15:24).

Nicodemus did not need Religion; he needed Life- new, spiritual Life. And what happens in the Miracle of the New Birth is that Life “*comes into being*” that was NOT there before. Death is swallowed up in Victory!

You see, new Life happens at the New Birth. So, this is NOT religious Activity or Discipline or Decision. This is the “*coming into being*” of Life. And like us- once that new spiritual Life came into contact with his spiritually dead soul- Nicodemus’ eyes and mind was opened; and he was able to behold the Glory of God in the Person of Jesus Christ (**2Corinthians 4:6**).

And once that happened- this man began to love what he saw (Jesus); and to be changed into what he saw (**2Corinthians 3:18**). And then Nicodemus- like all those who experience the Miracle of the New Birth- was able and willing to *joyfully* live his Life to the Glory of God- so that God’s great Name would be hallowed!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.