

BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED – GOD GAVE US NEW LIFE!

WHAT IS 'BORN AGAIN'?

Jesus said to Nicodemus one night, "You must be born again!" (John 3:7) We can summarise the answer of Jesus in this way:

1. NICODEMUS, BEING A JEW AND A PHARISEE IS NOT ENOUGH!

Nicodemus, you are a Jew and a Pharisee. If ever anyone thinks himself most fit to be a member of God's kingdom, it must be the Jewish Pharisee! But the fact is that who you are and what you do cannot and will not get you into the kingdom of God. Membership in God's kingdom is not an attainment, a reward, a prize or even a birthright. No external privilege, no hereditary quality, no birthright, no good works, no self-discipline, no adherence to a set of rules -- none of these will ever make you a member of God's kingdom. It is not like applying to join a club. You cannot pay membership fees, or bribe someone to be a member. Something more radical is needed. Your natural birth is not enough. You must be born again, you need re-birth!



2. NICODEMUS, YOU ARE TOTALLY DEPRAVED.

Every part of you has been affected by sin -- your intellect, your emotion, your will. Though the Law says -- *Your shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength* -- the fact is that YOU CANNOT!

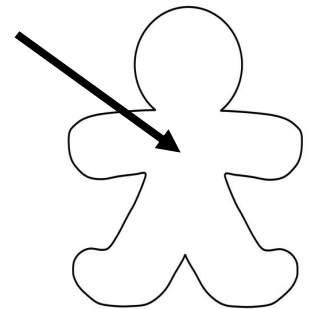
What you need is not *repair*. A chair that has one leg of its legs broken can be repaired but you need more than mere *repair*! What you need is not *recuperate*. A sick man, given sufficient rest and proper medication, over time, he will recover but you need more than just *recuperate*! What you need is not even *revival*. *Revival* is for someone who is alive but lethargic, who needs to be aroused and awakened. But you are dead and you therefore need more than just *revival*! No! What you need and what every one needs, is to be born again, to be re-created, to be re-generated, resulting in a new man, a new creation.



Nicodemus, you have been born once, born of the flesh. Now, what is born of the flesh is flesh. A cat cannot give birth to a dog and an apple tree cannot produce oranges. Likewise, sinful human nature can only produce sinful human beings. We are sinful because we are born from sinful nature. Natural birth cannot produce anything but natural. And the natural man cannot understand the things of God. He therefore cannot see, cannot enter the kingdom of God. To do so, we must be born again!

3. NICODEMUS, GOD MUST DO SOMETHING TO YOU!

You must be born again! I don't mean you must do something. I am saying that something must be done to you. The Holy Spirit must do something to you and in you. He must plant the life from above in your heart. The word "born" immediately suggests to us that it is not something that we can do. We do not decide *where*, *when* or *whether* to be born.



Think of the wind

- It blows and you cannot do anything to stop it blowing. It is irresistible, it is effectual. So also is the work of the Holy Spirit in causing us to be born again.
- It blows where it wishes. It is entirely sovereign in this sense. The wind does not listen to anyone as to where it should be blowing. This is the same in the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating us. You cannot tell where the wind comes from, and where it goes. It is mysterious, it is invisible. Again we see the similarity with respect to our being born again.
- Its effect can be seen. The wind blows and you can see the paper cup flying, the grass ruffles, the painting drops, the kite soars. Similarly, we can see the effects of the new birth although we do not know exactly *when* and *how* it happens.

In the new birth, we are passive. We don't make any contribution to being born again, just like we don't make any contributions to our physical birth. We do not know everything about being born again - the how and the when - but once God has given new life, we can soon discern the evidences of new life!

This is 'being born again'. Have you been born again?