

TEXT SERMONS

SERIES: *THE RICHES OF SALVATION*

MESSAGE #16

“THE POSSESSION OF SALVATION” – Part 1**I Peter 1:23*****“Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever....”***

How does one “possess” salvation? The answer: you must be born again, that is, have a second birth which is a spiritual birth. How many births have you had? It is possible to be born twice: a natural, that is a physical birth, and a supernatural, that is a spiritual birth.

Being “born again” is a familiar phrases heard by those both inside and outside the church. However, it is one of the most misunderstood terms used in the religious realm, to use the term “religious” is a most general sense. In this message I will attempt to clear up some of the misunderstandings by discussing, from the strictly biblical viewpoint, the new birth. First,

I. THE DEMAND FOR THE SECOND BIRTH.

In John chapter three is recorded the now famous conversation that Jesus had with a Jewish ruler named Nicodemus. Here is part of that exchange:

“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:1-8)

Jesus statement to Nicodemus in verse seven is emphatic: “you must be born again” in order to have the new life which He offers. This was not: a suggestion, good advice, a random opinion or a passing comment. It was a demand! Jesus did not say: “you may”; or “you ought” or “you should” but “you must be born again” to get into God’s Kingdom.

The question arises, “Why must we have a second birth? The answer is two-fold:

A. Because Of The Nature Of Humankind.

Jesus mentioned two births in His response to Nicodemus: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:6) One is a natural birth – “born of the flesh” and one is a spiritual birth – “born of the Spirit.” One is required to get into the human kingdom; one is required to get into God’s kingdom.

We entered the kingdom of the physical by a physical birth; we enter the kingdom of the spiritual by a spiritual birth. Paul wrote: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." (I Cor.15:50). Flesh at its best can only produce flesh; and since we must become spiritual in order to enter the spiritual kingdom of Jesus, it is necessary that we must be born anew. We are by nature flesh; we must receive a new nature that is spirit.

B. Because Of The Need Of Humankind.

What is our need? We need God's nature. In John 8:23 Jesus said very plainly: "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world." We have been born from below, we need to be born from above! That is spiritual birth.

Illust. There are in the world several different kingdoms:

- (1) The Mineral Kingdom. This is the lowest kingdom. It has no life – it is dead. Stones and soil are not born, they are formed by storms, upheavals of earth, decomposition and so on. The mineral kingdom is dead.
- (2) The next highest kingdom is the Vegetable Kingdom. The Vegetable Kingdom has life but not sensibility. Plants have life and reproduce but lack sense and feeling. The Mineral Kingdom is dead; The Vegetable Kingdom has life.
- (3) The third highest kingdom is the Animal Kingdom. The Animal Kingdom life, sensibility and will.
- (4) The fourth highest kingdom is the Human Kingdom. The Human Kingdom not only has life, sensibility and will but it has a spirit. That is, the faculty to perceive and respond to God.
- (5) The highest kingdom is the Divine Kingdom. Jesus said, "no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3)

Now, you say, "what is the point of all this?" Here it is: no kingdom can lift itself up into the kingdom above it! Follow please:

- (1) The Mineral Kingdom, soil, etc. cannot turn itself into grass;
- (2) The Vegetable Kingdom cannot turn itself into an animal, a cow, etc;
- (3) The Animal Kingdom cannot turn itself into a human being;
- (4) The Human Kingdom cannot lift itself up into the Divine Kingdom!

However, and here is where it gets very interesting, each higher kingdom can reach down and lift the lower kingdom up! Now follow:

- (1) The Vegetable Kingdom puts its roots down into the dead Mineral Kingdom and takes up the minerals and turns them into life;
- (2) Along comes a cow, the Animal Kingdom, and lifts up the grass and turns that which is of the Vegetable Kingdom into the Animal Kingdom;
- (3) Along comes the butcher and turns the cow, Animal Kingdom, into steak and the steak in turn is eaten and lifted up into the Human Kingdom.
- (4) Jesus Christ, of the Divine Kingdom reaches down into the Human Kingdom and lifts us up into the Divine Kingdom!

No kingdom can lift itself up into a higher kingdom! Life comes from above, that is why Jesus came down from heaven to earth; why He said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16,17)

One must be born from above to get into God's Kingdom. Life must be transmitted from above. We cannot pull ourselves up into God's Kingdom.

Illust. The Gospel song titled "He Lifted Me" conveys this message:

"In loving kindness Jesus came, my soul in mercy to reclaim;
And from the depths of sin and shame thru grace He lifted me.
From sinking sand He lifted me; with tender hand He lifted me;
From shades of night to plains of light,
Oh, praise His name, He lifted me."

II. THE DETAILS OF THE SECOND BIRTH.

The Bible makes it very clear that spiritual birth is the result of the action of the Spirit of God whereby He communicates divine life to believing sinners thereby making them children of God. To help us understand the "second" or spiritual birth I will begin with the negative and point out what being "born again" is not:

- (5) It is not a psychological experience. Some liberal theologians teach that: "A spiritual re-birth is a reawakening of a God consciousness." The Bible does not teach that, for if that is true, the devil himself is "born again" because James wrote: "You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe, and tremble." (James 2:19)
- (6) It is not being religious. Religion is a man-made ladder to facilitate an attempt to try to climb up to God. The second birth is the result of God coming down into us!
- (7) It is not reformation. Being born again is not turning over a new leaf but receiving a new life!
- (8) It is not the result of living a good moral life or doing good deeds. It is the result of having God's life imparted to us and experiencing a changed life from the inside out.

Those are some of the false assumptions that reveal what the second birth is not. Let us consider what the second birth, the spiritual birth, the new birth, the "born again" experience is, by reviewing the details pertaining to it.

A. It Is Introduced By The Word Of God.

The seed of the Word of God must be deposited in the soil of the soul: "Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God, which lives and abides forever." (I Peter 1:23)

The seed of the Word is deposited in the soul when one is exposed to the gospel

message. Peter continues, "...the word of the LORD endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you." (I Peter 1:25)

Paul the Apostle wrote a paragraph about this very essential truth. He said, "For 'Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.' How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" (Rom.10:13-15)

No one ever experiences the spiritual birth into God's family without the seed of the Word of God being deposited into the soul. That is why Paul emphasized the necessity of the Word being proclaimed.

B. It Is Implemented By The Holy Spirit.

Scripture is not teaching that merely hearing the gospel message results in the new birth. Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus makes it abundantly clear, that it is the Holy Spirit Who produces the new life in the believing sinner: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8)

Again, Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63) Paul declared: "You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." (I Cor.6:11)

C. It Is Imparted When Jesus Is Received By Faith.

"Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:15-18)

Notice the reoccurrence of the word "believe", "believes" and "believed" in the above passage. They occur five times. Paul and Silas said to the jailer of Philippi: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)

Again, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth." (II Thess. 2:13) Notice in this verse that we are told that God did the choosing, we do the believing. Believing sinners are the only sinners who can experience the second birth.

There are two types of faith: there is common faith:

- When we fly in an airplane we have faith in the pilot;

- When we enter into the operating room we have faith in the surgeon;
- When we eat at a restaurant we have faith in the chef, whom we do not usually see;
- When we cross a bridge we have faith that the engineers were competent;
- when we deposit our money in the bank we have faith that it will be safe.

That is common faith - faith placed in other human beings.

Then there is saving faith – faith that is placed in God. Why should we be surprised when we learn that God wants us to believe Him, trust Him, have faith in Him? Saving faith is putting our faith where God put our sins – on Christ! This is the key to our eternity with God.

An anonymous poet explained what God is asking us to do in these words:

“Upon a life I did not live,
Upon a death I did not die;
Upon Another’s life,
Upon Another’s death,
I stake my whole eternity.”

CONCLUSION

The demand for the new birth is personal and pointed: “You must be born again.” The details of the new birth reveal that the Word of God must be received; the Holy Spirit is the agent of the new birth and we have been born again by receiving Jesus Christ as our Savior.

A man who was not too bright about things mechanical came to a watchmaker and gave him the hands of a clock, saying, “I want you to fix these hands. They just do not keep good time anymore.” The clock repairman asked, “where is the clock?” The man replied, I left it at home – it is running all right – it’s the hands that are always wrong,” said the deluded man. The clockmaker replied, “But I must have the clock.” The man with the clock-hands insisted, “There is nothing wrong with the clock – it’s the hands that are always pointing to the wrong time. You just want the clock so you can tinker with it and charge me a big price.” The shop-keeper replied, “Sir, the trouble is not on the outside with the hands; the trouble is on the inside!”

If our hands are not working properly, it is the heart that needs fixing. The only remedy is the new birth. We have got to be changed on the inside by God or we cannot go where God is! In my naturally sinful state I cannot inhabit an eternity with God in His heaven. I’ve got to be changed. That change is called being born again.

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