

"Born Again"

We hear a lot of folks talking about being "born again." Well what does that mean? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study, In Search of the Lord's Way, and today, we're going to explore what it means to be born again!

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's way. We're here to search the Scriptures to find out God's will for our lives. We explore God's word, because it contains the words of eternal life. It teaches the most important lessons and it gives us hope. Thanks so very much for letting us into your busy life. We really appreciate hearing from you that you're watching or listening. And we want to be a regular part of your life each week.

Today we're asking: what does it mean to be "born again" or "born from above"? Is it some kind of "better felt than told" experience? Is it some spiritual feeling? Some people speak of "born again" Christians as if they were a special kind of Christian; but, the fact is, one must be "born again" to be a Christian at all. Since there is a lot of confusion about what it means to be "born again," it's worth our while to go back to the Bible and see what God says about being "born again."

Born again...Within the heart of most people is the desire to start over. We see our sin and we regret our past. We wished we could start over and do things differently. Some people even despise the person that they've become and they just wish they could be somebody else. The Lord gives us that opportunity, an opportunity to put away the old sinful person and to put on the new man in Christ, to change our lives, our attitudes, and our behavior. Today we're going to explore what this means how this happens.

Now if you're interested in what "born again" means, we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of it, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, you can call our toll-free telephone number. We'll pay for the call. That number is 1-800-321-8633. Now we also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from John 3:1 to 7, and we'll explore what it means to be born again.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to John, chapter 3, verses 1 through 7. "Now 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've come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, 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? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?' Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and 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. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.''" Now that's a reading from the gospel according to John. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that we can be born again, that we can have a different life, that we can make things new and be new creatures. Father help us to do Your will always. And may Your will be done earth in our lives as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, said, “Rabbi, we know that you’re a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” Now the Lord Jesus is indeed the Son of God, but what He told Nicodemus was unexpected. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Now the words “truly, truly,” shows that He’s serious. The word “truly” in Greek actually is the word “Amen.”

Now Nicodemus questions, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” (verse 4) Nicodemus, as a ruler of the Jews, should have understood what Jesus was talking about. Now Gentiles who became proselytes were thought to be “born again” when they were baptized. Nicodemus was not a proselyte. He couldn’t imagine being compared to one of them.

Jesus makes it clear, “Truly, truly, 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’ (John chapter 3, verses 5 to 7). Now even a ruler of the Jews needed what Jesus required for eternal life.

Jesus said, “You *must* be born again.” That little word “must” means it’s necessary, if you want to please God. “Must” refers to a “moral necessity.” Jesus later said that he “must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day” (Matthew 16 verse 21). Jesus saw the cross as necessary. Now if you or I enter the kingdom of heaven, we must first be born again of water and the Spirit. No matter who we are—even Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, had to be born again in baptism to go to heaven.

The baptism of Jesus was a birth of water and the Spirit. Both water and Spirit were involved. Water is involved, of course, in that baptism is a dipping in water, an immersion. The Holy Spirit is involved through the Word. Peter explains this in 1 Peter 1 verses 22 to 23: he said, “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.”

Now without the preaching of the gospel, we would not believe or know what we must do in order to obey the truth. But it’s in obeying the truth that we purify our souls and are born again of the word. The Word is an *imperishable* seed. And it’s for all generations. As a seed, what it produced in the first century, it will produce today. That’s how we know we are Christians today like they were in the first century; we have obeyed the same gospel that they did. Born of the same seed they were born of.

Now the gospel produces faith in us. The Bible says in Romans 10 and verse 17, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” The more we listen to God’s Word, the greater our faith will become. One listens, then, because of faith, and he wants to obey that gospel. It’s when the word works on our heart that it brings about change in the life and we become a new person—truly born of the Spirit by His seed, the Word.

The Bible explains this new birth, and where we came from, and how God has blessed us in the book of Titus chapter 3, verses 3 to 7: he said, “For we also once were (we were) foolish ourselves, (we were) disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, (how did He do it?) by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His

grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.” Folks we needed God’s grace; and we needed saving! And He was willing to do that through the washing of regeneration.

Now God’s grace and mercy saved us. We didn’t earn it; God gave us His grace through “the washing of regeneration” and the “renewing by the Holy Spirit.” Now the phrase “washing of regeneration” refers to a washing that causes one to be regenerated, that is “born again.” This “washing” is a clear reference to baptism as the time of the cleansing from sin and being born from above. Let me emphasize that it is God who washes us and the Spirit who renews us. We are washed in the blood of Jesus, who died for us. Some people think baptism is a work of men; but in baptism God does the work of cleansing, regenerating (causing one to be born again), and the renewing.

How do we get this new life? Well the Bible says in Romans 6 verses 3 to 7. “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we’ve become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.”

Now to be reborn, one must first die to self and to sin. You’re either a servant of sin or a servant of the Lord. It’s only when you’re crucified with Christ in baptism that you die to the old man of sin and then you can be raised to walk in newness of life—and be reborn!

And that’s the real meaning of bearing a cross. Jesus said in Luke 9:23 to 24, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”

You see, that new life begins at baptism but lasts our whole life through. When you’re baptized, you’re born into the family of God. Jesus said in John 1 verses 11 to 13, that “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, and who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” *By faith* in God’s word, we obey Christ. We purify our souls by obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22). And this is why we don’t question if we should be baptized, we do it out of love to obey Him and to be pure. You see it’s obedience to the word, the seed, that opens the door for us to be born again by God.

When you’re born again in baptism, you become a new creature. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 17, “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” In Christ the old man of sin has been put away, crucified with Christ, so that a new man in Christ has come to be.

Now Ephesians chapter 4, verses 17 to 24 describes the change that not only takes place spiritually but also in our lives day to day. He says: “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord (Ephesians 4:17), that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that’s in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you didn’t learn Christ in this way, if indeed you’ve heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, that you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” You

see, the new birth changes hearts, and attitudes, desires and purposes. The new person wants to be like the Lord in all holiness.

This is the kind of life a Christian should live when he's born again. Ephesians 4:25 to 32 goes on and describes this, and it says, "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one *of you* with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you."

Christians leave the sinful and turn to the holy in character, because they become like Christ. Paul said in Galatians 5:22 to 23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, and joy, and peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." A person who is born of the Spirit shows these things.

When you're born into the family of God, you have God as your Father. As a Father God protects, and provides, He guides, instructs, and corrects. God gives His children the privilege of prayer, listening to every request and every concern. He not only listens; He answers. In Christ we're deeply blessed. Ephesians 1 and verse 3 says, "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every (every, every) spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ." Being born into the family of God gives us all the privileges of God's favor and it gives us an inheritance. We are fellow-heirs with Christ.

When you're born into God's family, the Lord adds you to the church and He writes your name in the Lamb's book of life. God says in Ephesians 2 verses 19 to 22, "So then you're no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and you are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." My friend, you can do nothing, nothing, nothing more important than to be born again!

God wants you to be born again and to come into His family, so He can love you and be close to you. So put your trust in Him and turn away from sin. And when you out of love obey Him in baptism, He'll crucify the old man of sin and cause you to be born again. Oh, what a blessing! Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You can take us from our old sinful ways, and help us to become new people, new creatures in Your sight. And Father, help us to be obedient to Your will in everything that we do, and to love You and to love one another. May Your will be done earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Being born again changes our lives entirely. Peter said of Christians in 1 Peter 2 verses 9 to 10, "But you are a chosen race, A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God's* own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

We turn from being a “nobody” to being “somebody” with God. We turn from shame to being a saint and from darkness to light. That’s what it means to be born again, God’s great blessing!

Some people ask the question, “Can God really make me over?” They feel so ashamed of their past, they don’t believe they can live the Christian life. Oh my friend, there’s good news for you. If you want to change—I mean really want to become a child of God—there’s room in the heart of God for you. The apostle Paul wasn’t always an apostle. He was once Saul of Tarsus, a man who blasphemed Christ and persecuted Christians. He described himself as the chief of sinners, since he had violently persecuted the church. Paul said in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verses 15 and 16, that “It’s a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, (and then he says) among whom I am foremost *of all*.” The Lord loves every person on this earth, and the people He died for were all sinners.

Paul continues, “Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.” Oh, the Lord will also show you patience. You can go to heaven. You can be saved from all your sins and live eternally. How? You *must* be born again, by believing with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, repenting of your sins, confessing the name of Jesus, and by being baptized (that is immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins). That opportunity is yours if you’ll take and receive it. Don’t just believe, act on your faith—you must.

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