



WHY YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

JOHN 3:7; 16-18

If anyone in the entire world deserved to go to heaven because of his goodness and sincerity, it was Nicodemus. He was moral, religious, and believed something about Jesus. Yet Jesus said to him, “Nicodemus, you must be born again.” (Read v. 7)

“Nicodemus, your goodness will not save you.” All of our efforts outside God’s plan are in vain. (Read vv. 16-18). It can’t be any clearer—we do the believing—God does the saving.

This is taught from one end of the Bible to the other. In Ez. 36:26 God says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you.” Being born again means a new heart and a new spirit.

The Bible says in Acts 3:19, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.” And in 2 Cor. 5:17, being in Christ makes a person “a new creation.” Old things are gone, replaced by new. This is being born again.

In other words, when we repent of our sins and accept Jesus, we are made spiritually alive. This is being born again. The Apostle John called this passing from death to life (1 John 3:14).

But why did Nicodemus need to be born again? He was obviously a good man! For the same reason each of us need to be born again? So we can be made spiritually alive. Is this really possible, or are we always going to be the way we are?

Yes, it is very possible! We can be made spiritually alive; we can be changed and become a child of God—and prepared go to heaven. And boy do we want to go to heaven. Eighty-seven percent of Americans believe they are headed there.

We want to go to heaven—most of us think we’re going to, but thinking it doesn’t make it so. We must meet God’s requirement. Jesus said, “You must be born again.” Circle “must.” Why must we be born again?

1. Because God loves us.

The most famous lines in the Bible come from John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

We love this verse because we think, “God loves me.” That’s true, but He loves others as well. God loves Europeans and Asians and Africans. He loves poor people and rich people.

God loves the able-bodied and the disabled. God loves the very likeable and the most detestable and all those in between. He loves the CEO, the valedictorian, the meth addict, and the Eagle Scout. He loves homosexuals and straights.

And God wants us to love those He loves. In personal terms it’s like this. I love my wife. I love our children and grandchildren. I love Del Norte Baptist. I want you to love who I love. In fact, your attitude toward those who are important to me impacts our relationship.

It’s the same with God. God loves us the way a father loves his children. He loves us passionately and fully. God sees our potential. He forgives our sins. He helps us when we don’t deserve His help. He loves our neighbors as well as the drunk in the gutter. And He wants us to love in the same way, and share His love.

I don’t know how or why God loves this world in the state it’s in. But He does! No one is left out. And He wants everyone to be born again because He loves everyone. We must be born again...

2. Because God wants to forgive us.

(1) Every person is a sinner:

The Bible says “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We are all sinners. We’ve all broken the law of God.

Have you ever broken one of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17)—misused God’s name, dishonored your parents, murder, adultery, stealing, lying, envy—you know, those kinds of things?

The Bible says if we have broken one, we have broken them all; if we have broken just even one in our heart, we have broken all of them. This means all of us are sinners, and all of us need forgiveness—even though forgiveness is a costly thing.

Human forgiveness is costly. A son or a daughter may go wrong; a father or a mother may forgive; but forgiveness has brought tears. ... There was the price of a broken heart to pay.

Divine forgiveness is also costly. God is love, but God is also holiness. God cannot and will not break the great moral laws on which the universe is built. Sin must have its punishment or the very structure of life disintegrates.

Only God alone can pay the terrible price that is necessary before men can be forgiven. Forgiveness is never a case of saying: "It's all right; it doesn't matter."

Forgiveness is the most costly thing in the world. Why must we be born again? Because Jesus, God's Son, died for our sins, and we need forgiveness for our sins! In other words...

(2) Jesus made forgiveness of sins possible:

Jesus Christ made forgiveness possible. When He was nailed to the cross, blood flowed from His hands, His side, His feet, and His head where the crown of thorns had been pressed.

He suffered as no one has ever suffered. There have been many martyrs, even many people crucified. But Jesus suffered in a different way. He suffered from the weight of our sins.

Jesus took the guilt and penalty of our sins. Every lie we've ever told, every evil thought we've ever had, were placed upon Jesus. He bore the sins of the world. That was His real suffering.

2 Cor. 5:21, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. This is why...

(3) Jesus is the only way of salvation:

Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins" (John 8:24). And in Acts 4:12, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Think about it—there is no salvation anywhere else. If there were any other way, Jesus wouldn't have had to die on the cross. You can't inherit it, work for it, or be good enough. We have to come to Christ for salvation if we want to go to heaven.

This is what being "born again" is: Christ comes into our hearts and possesses us and helps us in our daily lives. Then...

(4) God forgives and forgets:

When we are born again every sin we have ever committed is forgiven and forgotten. We may not be able to forget, but God does.

I heard about a woman who had done something maybe fifteen years before that was pretty bad. Her husband told her, "I want you to know I forgive you totally."

She told her pastor, “I know he’s forgiven me because every week of my life, he tells me he’s forgiven me.” Her husband wanted her to remember her sin over and over, and that he hadn’t forgotten. God forgives and forgets—as if your sins had never been.

But if you haven’t been born again then your sins are not forgiven and forgotten. God knows your every thought, every act, every word, and every intention.

He knows your past and what’s going on in your life today. All of that can be cleaned up right now by responding to Christ.

When you break the law of God you have to pay. Without Christ that payment is judgment then hell (v. 18). But God, in His grace, offers you forgiveness for your sins and failures.

He will forgive you, not because you deserve it, but because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross. You must be born again...

3. Because God wants to accept us.

(1) God declares we are not guilty:

When we in faith believe in Jesus Christ, repent of our sins, and receive Him into our hearts, at that very moment God, the just and righteous judge, declares us “not guilty.”

We are forgiven for all eternity. It’s as if we had never sinned. This is justification by faith, and it means that God accepts us because of what Christ did on the cross and because of our acceptance of Christ.

(2) To have peace with God.

When you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, Rom. 5:1 says, Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... This world lacks peace because people are not at peace with God.

But it doesn’t have to be that way for you. Jesus said in John 5:24, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” You can have assurance and peace right now. You must be born again...

4. Because God wants us in His family.

(1) Repent

Repent means to change—change your mind, change your way of living, and in faith trust your

life to Christ. Jesus said in Luke 13:3, “Unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

Repentance is a matter of the heart and mind. God sees our hearts and He knows our minds. If we repent He will give us the power to turn away from our old way of life. So why doesn't everyone accept Christ?

Because Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4). So without God's help, we really cannot understand what it means to be born again.

There is a voice inside each one of us helping us understand—convicting us—and making us uncomfortable about our sins and our relationship to God. This voice is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit turns the spotlight on us and we realize our sinfulness and unholiness and our need for God. This is God speaking to you.

Repentance means coming to our senses, suddenly seeing what we're doing to ourselves. It strikes us in the gut. This is when you must ask God for forgiveness. The longer you put it off the more barriers you erect.

A. W. Tozer said, “God will take nine steps toward us, but he will not take the tenth. He will incline us to repent, but he cannot do our repenting for us.”

(2) Accept:

Acts 16:31, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

On the cross Jesus paid the ultimate price. Acceptance is to put your faith in him and what He did for you on the cross. Your faith must be in Him, not in yourself. Acceptance means, in faith, commitment of all you are to Jesus.

It means you surrender your will to the will of Christ. Faith is knowing, simply knowing, that the answers to life are found in Jesus Christ.

Faith cannot be inherited. Faith is individual. My parents and grandparents were Christians. But that didn't make me a Christian. To be born into a Christian family was a blessing, but I still had to believe in Jesus Christ myself.

To be born again you must do it personally. Before you leave here today make sure that Jesus Christ is your Savior. Be certain of it. He will give you joy and peace that you never imagined.

Do you know for certain that you belong to God's family? Are you sure? Have you been born again? You can be certain, you know.

Application:

There really is no better time than right now to make sure you are right with God and have the assurance of going to heaven when your life is over. If you would like to be born again today: understand that your sins separate you from God. Turn from them by asking for God's forgiveness (repent); believe that Jesus Christ paid the penalty you deserve for your sins when He died on the cross, and that He rose again three days later; and, ask Him to be your Savior and Lord (accept).