

Morning Sermon Outline – October 1, 2017

“You Must Be Born Again” John 3

John chapter three starts with the introduction of Nicodemus – Nicodemus was:

1. A man of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of the Jewish religion of that day
2. A ruler of the Jews, meaning a member of the Sanhedrin one of 70 to rule over all the Jews
3. “The” teacher of Israel - :10

In addition, our Lord’s identification of Nicodemus in verse 10 as “Israel’s teacher” may mean Nicodemus was considered to be the greatest teacher in Jerusalem. There is some evidence that he came from a very aristocratic family that traced its bloodline back to the Maccabees. R. Kent Hughes

The Maccabees were the Chanukah heroes, probable leaders of those prophesied about by Daniel in Daniel 11:32 –

"Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. (Daniel 11:32 NKJ)

A man could not have a better pedigree than Nicodemus. Add to that an excellent upbringing and education in Biblical religion and you would think, this man had to be on his way to Heaven ...

He was NOT, he NEEDED –

I. A great, dramatic change –

"Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born again." (John 3:7 NKJ)

Now, do not make the mistake of thinking that Nicodemus was confused by Jesus language. Jesus starts His teaching about the second birth in verse :3 and Nicodemus responds by saying -

"How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (John 3:3-4 NKJ)

Though it may seem that Nicodemus is thinking of a physical re-climbing into his now much older mother’s womb, he is probably with Jesus (at least partially) and is thinking even of the difficulty of a spiritual re-climbing; a starting over for one who is “old” meaning spiritually and morally accomplished, as he probably thought he himself was. What more could he do? Read the Bible more? Be more disciplined? He was already THE BEST of the best among his peers, who thought of themselves as the best of the best ...

Yet, Jesus says –

"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the* righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20 NKJ)

The Pharisees had: man’s righteousness, they had outward righteousness, they had the righteousness of the flesh, Nicodemus must have been a lot like Paul, when Paul was Saul – though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. (Phil. 3:4-6 NKJ)

However, both Nicodemus and Paul would realize their fleshly, Pharisaical, self-righteousness was not enough –

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; (Phil. 3:7-9 NKJ)

Both Paul and Nicodemus eventually realized the needed more ...

How much more?

1. *A little change? Nicodemus might have thought he was almost there ...*

This is what the rich young ruler thought –

Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18 NKJ)

The rich young ruler, asked, what shall I do? Jesus answered him according to His question – keep the commandments ...

And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." ²² So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing.** Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." ²³ But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. ²⁴ And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶ And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁷ But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:21-27 NKJ)**

It may have been one thing with the rich young ruler, but it was a BIG THING –

2. *We have a dreadful time trying to CHANGE OURSELVES - Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil. (Jeremiah 13:23 NKJ) However ----*
²⁷ But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:21-27 NKJ)

3. *By nature, even our best works (deeds) are filthy – But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away. (Isaiah 64:6 NKJ)*

4. *By nature we are children of wrath –*

among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Ephesians 2:3 NKJ)

5. *We need to be new creatures –*
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJ)

6. *We need spiritual heart surgery –*
"Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ "that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. (Ezekiel 11:19-20 NKJ)

II. An absolutely needed change –

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3 NKJ)

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:5 NKJ)

"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' (John 3:7 NKJ)

Without the New Birth:

1. *We cannot see the kingdom of God – John 3:3*
Meaning we are BLIND to the things of God! Question: How blind were the Pharisees? Answer: They were blind to their own sins – "Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. ²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matthew 23:26-28 NKJ)

Such an easy trap to fall into, why?

A. *They look better than others, outward sinners, who they compare themselves to, rather than to God's standards –*

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men-- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. (Luke 18:11 NKJ)

B. *Because they are admired by others, they do not concern themselves with God's evaluation –*

"They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷ 'greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' (Matthew 23:6-7 NKJ)

C. *They become blind even to their blindness –*

Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?" ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains. (John 9:40-41 NKJ)

D. *Ultimately, like others they count the real things of God foolishness, a stumbling block –*

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:18 NKJ)

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14 NKJ)

2. *Without the new birth we cannot enter God's kingdom –*

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:5 NKJ)

If you cannot see the Door, you cannot get in!

A. *This was the problem for the men of Sodom –*

And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door. (Genesis 19:11 NKJ)

B. *Christ is the Door to Heaven –*

Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. (John 10:7 NKJ)

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. (John 10:9 NKJ)

C. *Nicodemus was not seeing Christ for ALL HE TRULY is –*

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." (John 3:2 NKJ)

Jesus was a teacher come from God, but He was also much more-- Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:49 NKJ)

3. *Without the New Birth, even a seemingly good man, Israel' teacher, Nicodemus isn't making it –*

"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'YOU must be born again.' (John 3:7 NKJ)

III. *A Holy Spirit / God (not man) accomplished change –*

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:5-6 NKJ)

"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 3:8 NKJ)

"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 NKJ)

1. *Water and the Spirit, either refers to natural birth, plus Spirit empowered spiritual birth or water symbolizing water baptism / repentance plus Spirit empowered spiritual new birth! Either way the Spirit's work is needed!*

2. *The Spirit blows where it wishes, meaning He, has His own will, He is sovereign regarding the new birth!*

3. *The Spirit gives, life, the flesh profits NOTHING, a PhD in religion, or an MDiv, or being both the son, grandson and great grandson of pastors, none of these things accomplish the New Birth –*

4. *Now the Word of God, the Bible, is the needed SEED for the New Birth –*

having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,²⁴ because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away,²⁵ But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:23-25 NKJ)

5. *Repentance goes with it –*

Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For *it is* time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you. (Hosea 10:12 NKJ)

IV. *What you should expect with this change? –*

1. *A strong recognition of sin and need –*

"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:⁹ "of sin, because they do not believe in Me;¹⁰ "of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;¹¹ "of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. (John 16:8-11 NKJ)

2. *A realization that Christ and His cross are the only way of salvation from sin –*

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,¹⁵ "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.¹⁶ "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.¹⁷ "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:14-17 NKJ)

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18 NKJ)

3. *Finally, growth in grace and victory through the power of God's Spirit –*

A. *Righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees -*
If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. (1 John 2:29 NKJ)

B. *Victory over sin because the Spirit does not, nor can He sin -*
Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. (1 John 3:9 NKJ)

C. *Love which is a fruit of the Spirit –*
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (Galatians 5:22 NKJ)

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (1 John 4:7 NKJ)

D. *True faith in and love for Jesus Christ -*
Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. (1 John 5:1 NKJ)

E. *Victory over an ungodly world -*
For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith. (1 John 5:4 NKJ)

F. *Victory over sin and Satan (the wicked one) -*
We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. (1 John 5:18 NKJ)

Arnold A. Brevick

