

on him, but they were narrow in their ideas and it led them to a state of bitterness. And they crossed the deadline of redemption, and so provoked divine wrath that Jesus said of them, "Therefore they could not believe." The Spirit of God was withdrawn from them, and left them in the same condition in a spiritual sense as one who has committed the unpardonable sin,--sin by blaspheming the Holy Spirit. This is why we make our appeal to you today, that you have an open mind concerning this truth that we are to present.

He does not say that you must join a church, any church, he does not say that you must call yourself by his name or any name. He does not say that you must do many wonderful works or any wonderful works at all. He does not say that you must pray through whatever people pray through. He does not say that you must sign a card or a pledge. He does not say that you must live a good life. He does not say that you must hold out faithful to the end. He does not say that you must take of the Lord's Supper or any sacrament. He does not say that you must do the best you can. Even though any of these or all of these may be desirable or useful. Still Jesus does not say that you must do any of them before you can enter the kingdom, but he does say, "Ye must be born again

Intro: No chapter in all the Bible do we feel more familiar than with this third chapter of John. Here we have the marvelous expression of God's love in the 16th verse. Luther once said it was the gospel in a nutshell. Another distinguished preacher once said that if you should take away all the Old Testament and the New Testament, and leave with him only this text, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life", he would have enough of the heart of God and he would know enough of the plan of salvation to be saved.

There is (no more vital subject) in the Bible than the one that we are to discuss today. The subject of the Christian's new birth. This is a tremendously important subject because of two reasons: (first) all hope for man in this life and the life to come is based on the new birth. (second), it is important because of the source of our authority for such a statement, and that is the word of God.

(Of all the sermons) that Jesus preached while here on earth perhaps this is one of the most important. In this brief message which he preached to one man one night. That man was Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. We learn that he came

at evening time, and sought out Jesus the carpenter. We might ask, what does Nicodemus want?

We might ask (what does Nicodemus have) He had everything. He's not a man of great sin, he's not a man of low character. He's not a man of immoral habit, not a man of poor education. He's the best man (institutional religion) can make. He is cultural, loyal, high-minded, generous, and devotedly religious. He has social power and respect. He has influence and position. The supreme court is behind him. He has wealth and security. In addition he is clean, reserved, superior, removed, dignified and rich. He has all his religion (can give him) All the best religion of his time can give him, and yet he is hungry. Like all his kind, he is hungry, and we see the hunger as he comes to Jesus by night. This good man is a sincere speaker for truth. He evidently had an open mind that was free from narrow prejudices, a thing that has hindered and cursed the human race through the ages, and still he came with the world's most pressing problem, to Jesus to discuss it.

Perhaps no chapter in all the Bible is so difficult of explanation. When we think about regeneration as it is presented here, someone would say, "give me a definition of

Regeneration" I question as to whether or not we could give a satisfactory explanation that would be plain to men and women. But if someone should say, "Give me an illustration" we could do that, we could tell the story of a man who came into one of the services bound with sin, and who for months now has been free,--this is the result of regeneration. We could tell the story of helpless women and hopeless, who would give marvelous testimonies of the keeping power of Jesus Christ. And we could find friends who would tell about them and their changed lives and the expression in their speech, and how that they are new creatures,--now this is regeneration. And this is the thing that we face in this sermon, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." So when you say that (you have resolved to give up sin, that is not enough). When you tell me that you have resolved never again to go in the way of iniquity, that is not enough. Even if you could keep the resolutions. If one is to become a new creature and overcome the power of old sin and new temptation, he must be born from above. And that means to have implanted in his nature a new force from above, a new life which is the life of God.

There were certain groups of men called Pharisees and Sadducees who heard Jesus preach, saw his miracles, looked upon his acts of mercy, observed his great heart of love, and yet they believed not on him. Not only did they refuse to believe

hope... there is no open door. No man would dare to say that by his own efforts he could reach the standard of righteousness, that would pass the judgment of the infinite God. Then how are you going to be saved? I know how you may be saved, and I will tell you that without this way there is no hope, only despair. And I can tell it to the rich and to the poor, and this message to the outcast and to the respectable. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Luke 13:3 "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"

Here's another exception that Jesus filed. What is repentance

There are people who say that repentance is (sorrow) for sin.

Then all men repent, for there is surely not a man bound with a passion, nor a woman held with a sin who has not had sorrow for sin. They may have said with hearts almost breaking, O

that I might be saved, but you must remember that that is not repentance. There are those who say that (remorse) is repentance

Then all the sinful people in this sinful city have repented, because day by day, they walk in the streets, night by night, tossing restlessly upon their beds, they have said, "Oh God, my sin, my sin." Repentance in a sense, is sorrow for sin.

It is the crushing effect of remorse. But in addition, it is saying, without God's help, I will turn away from sin.

It is turning about face and looking unto him, is the simple

Now when a man is born again, (several things take place). He is saved, he is forgiven, he is regenerated, he becomes a child of God, his name is written in the lamb's book of life. He has eternal life. He is changed. He becomes a new creature. Therefore we realize that being born again is the most important thing that can ever happen to a human being. This is man's greatest need.

The new birth is (a universal necessity). It is a must.

Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh."

Romans 8:5. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. We are born first of the flesh, we must be born again of the spirit to enter the kingdom of Christ.

In the flesh we are sinners. In the spirit, we are saints.

In the flesh we are condemned; in the spirit we are saved.

The (first birth puts us in the family of man). The second birth puts us in the family of God. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." John 3:6.

The (psalmist) cried, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Psalms 53:5. We see from

the Bible that all of us are by our very natures sinners.

Something is dreadfully wrong with man. He is from his mother's womb, a naturally-born sinful creature.

Man goes astray from birth. The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Psalm 58:3. Everyone knows that something is wrong with the world. What is wrong with you. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way" Isaiah 53:6. Everyday we hear thoughtful people say, "This world is in a mess. We're living in terrible days."

Here in America the republicans blame the democrats, and the democrats blame the republicans. We blame the educational system, the parents blame the children. Who then, is to blame?

The simple main answer is, "All have sinned, all have gone astray, the whole human race is to blame, each individual is to blame. We do wrong because our very nature is toward that way. We sin because we are sinners. And the Bible plainly shows this whole world reeling and rocking toward hell.

The instability of this world today as we think about the rise of socialism, the falling away in the churches, the pressure that we have, the fear of atomic war, Castro in Cuba, and Russia, and poverty, disease, and strife and overcrowded

conditions and violence, and the awful liquor traffic...the burdens that we have. What is wrong with this generation? Sin.

When you educate a sinful man, he is more dangerous than before. When you make him rich, he is still worse. Education and financial improvement are obviously not the answer to what we need here.

I want you to note some exceptions given in the Bible. Jesus filed a bill of exceptions.

Matt. 18:3. "Verily, I say unto you, except ye become converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. There are those who say that there is a distinction made between conversion and regeneration. They say that conversion is your part of the work and regeneration is God's part. Conversion is your putting yourself in the way --regeneration is God's doing the work in you. Conversion is saying, "I will" and regeneration is God breathing into you the breath of his own life.

Matt. 5:20 - "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." So there is little hope for the one who puts away the Saviour. Indeed there is no

heart burning, and from that day to this, I have been a perfect battery of emotion myself." We need to lay hold on God's word and it will do its own work.

There is a certain amount of mystery about this. For example, Thomas Edison said that he did not understand electricity, but he became famous with its use. He certainly did not deny its existence. I don't know very much about electricity, but I do know how to push a button that turns on the light. I know its there when I need it. It remains a mystery to me...I do not understand it, but I'm grateful for it.

The new birth, according to Jesus is a mystery. John admitted that he did not comprehend what Jesus was talking about. The Bible says that Nicodemus was a ruler, a teacher of the Jews, a Pharisee. He was religious, he was sincere, he was courteous, educated, respected citizen. His problem was that he had never been born again, and he has it explained to him. And he wanted to know what he must do to receive it, what he ought to do, what he could do to receive this new birth. How can the new birth take place. The first thought that flashed through the mind of Nicodemus...how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his Mother's womb and be born? His question brought forth from the master a clear and a distinct reply that the spiritual birth was not the physical birth, though the birth of the flesh is typical

description of it.

The other exception is John 3:3 "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now, you can hear somebody say, "Well, I cannot come to Jesus" Why? "Because I have no feeling." But you never will have, until you come. Another person might say, "I cannot come to Jesus", you ask him why and he says he has another reason, "Because the doctrine of atonement seems to me impossible, and I cannot understand how Jesus Christ died on Calvary." If you could explain the atonement he would become a Christian. Then he will never become a Christian, for not until we see God can we begin to understand the atonement. Not an angel or saint in heaven understands it. Eternity will not be long enough in which to comprehend it. If you're waiting for this, you're like a man who will say about mathematics or astronomy, "I cannot understand it, thus I'll never enter the class, because I do not know anything about it." You'll never solve a problem that way, you must come by faith.

When this exception comes, there are some who say there are too many contradictions but I am sure that there has never been a book in the world that has had such harmony in the Old Testament from Genesis to Revelation. If you wait to argue your way through your difficulties, you will

never come to Christ.

A man came to Mr. Moody once and said, "If you will answer this long list of questions, I will become a Christian," Mr. Moody was too clever for him. He said, *you accept Christ now & come back tomorrow & I will answer all your questions -*

his face shining, and he said, "Mr. Moody, I will not have to put you to the trouble of answering the questions, they have all been answered in the night and the way is clear." (That is the way to come.) If men, the latch of whose shoes you are not worthy to unloose, if men and women in whom you have perfect confidence as you have in your mother, if men like Gladstone, like President McKinley, and General Booth, and Katherine Booth say, "We took the step by faith, and all the way became increasingly bright ahead of us," then I think that we may trust the Saviour, verily, verily, I say except a man be born again,--this is a statement made by Jesus and he made it very plain. This is what he said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." And even though we cannot see through it all, we know that this is his word and there is no contradiction in it.

Naturally, the question comes how is this to take place? How can it be? Can you understand how a drunkard may be born again? We may come nearer when we think about Nicodemus, a moral man, and yet Jesus said to him, "Ye must be born again" because Jesus made it very plain, that except a man be born again, born of the Word, he could not see the kingdom of God. He was talking to a Jew, and if you turn back to the Old Testament you will see that the reference to water here is a reference to the word. Except a man be born of the Word,--what does that mean? It means that you may take God's promise of salvation and hold on to it by faith, and on the basis of his promise, you may make your plea and God will help his word. this is the way to be saved. As many people have taken this verse,--the 16th verse here in this chapter, and have read it as a student said, "I stopped and said, that is inclusive enough for me...he gave his only son, that is provision enough for me, that whosoever believeth in him, that is definite enough for me, should not perish." And the student said, "I rose, took my little New Testament in my hand, I held it above my head and I said, O God here this morning I accept this statement of thine as the truth, I will hold on to it while I live. I will carry it with me to judgment, and if I am not saved, it will go hard with your book, and suddenly I found my eyes filled with tears, my lips trembling, I found my

God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born not of blood nor of the will of flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12,13. It is surely no accident that the word quite properly translated again, in John 3:3, could also be rendered from above. The new birth is not a product of good breeding, of self-determination, or of religious rites. Only God is able to create life. Only God can impart new life to us.

I think our search for the why and the answer that Nicodemus sought may be bound up into two or three things.

First, the assurance that Jesus gave him. He assured him of his incarnate existence. In other words he gave Nicodemus the assurance that he was the son of God as follows, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven." Then Jesus in order to illustrate, took Nicodemus back to an Old Testament incident which occurred in the wilderness wanderings of Israel, the record of which is found in Numbers 21:5-9.

"And the people spake against God and against Moses, wherefore have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness, for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loathes this light bread, and the Lord God sent, fiery serpents among the people. And the bit the people and much people of Israel died, therefore the people

of the spiritual birth. In what way is it typical?

First, a new life comes into existence. When a baby is born to parents, one more creature is given life. When one experiences the new birth, eternal life is given to one more creature. And when parents have a child born to them, one more person is added to the family. When a spiritual birth takes place one more person is added to the family of God. When a baby is born to parents, it inherits the love, protection and provision, expected of parental care. When one is born into the family of God, he has the heavenly father, and he is an heir to all of God the father's riches and unlimited resources.

When one is born into an earthly home, he is expected to honor and regard his parents' authority, and is subject to their discipline. When one is born into the family of God, he is expected to honor divine authority, and is most certainly a subject to the discipline of a loving and just God.

The writer of Hebrews makes it plain, "Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection to the father of spirits and live, for verily for a few days hasten us after their own pleasures, but he for our prophet that we might be partakers of his holiness."

As an earthly parent we provide all the physical needs, and opportunities of training for our children. As a child of God we are provided with all these things in life, and a home in heaven according to his will. How impressive is the promise of Jesus, in my father's house are many mansions.

When one is born into an earthly home, he inherits a name and a relationship as a child that cannot be taken from him. Not anything that he may do nor anyone else may do can break that family relationship of child to parent, for that relationship came with a birth. A physical birth is not a legal act, it is an act of nature. When one is born into the family of God, no one can separate that soul from God. That relationship did not come from a legal process, it came about by a birth.

Jesus said, "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." This is good news, the best news that the world has ever heard. Paul was so electrified by the assurance and the preservation of his soul that he exclaimed, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He that spared not his own son but offered him up."

Naturally, Nicodemus heard these words and he was concerned and eager as to how he might experience this new birth and how he might become a child of God. Who wouldn't? If there is an experience such as the new birth that brings this re-

lationship of an individual in regard to God, and will enable him to escape the fires of hell, and guarantee a home in heaven, people everywhere should be asking, "Tell us, how can this thing be?" That is what Nicodemus asked,--"How can these things be." Now Jesus knew what was in Nicodemus. He knew what was in a man, and Nicodemus could not understand how a man be born when he is old. These questions are not strange, how can a man get away from time? How can a man get away from what time does for him? Time is an enemy. Time runs out on us. A man can't escape it. He may look at time with faultless courage. But it will trap him. Is there a place on earth or in heaven that a man may begin again? Flesh is flesh, always was flesh and is flesh now, and always will be flesh.

This is a new word to Nicodemus and it means something,-- something for his situation, and we know that he did not quite grasp how can this thing happen. How can it happen his heart cried out.

Of course the agent of the new birth,--specifically it is God the Holy Spirit, who begets us and brings us forth in a new birth. Born of the spirit. We have here no reference as to joining the church and other things that people commonly term as an experience of the new birth. "But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of



When I think about the how of the new birth, I think also of the experience. It is an experience that one has. When the people were bitten by the serpents, they looked upon the serpent of brass, they lived. They were healed. That is exactly what happened to Nicodemus when he believed on Jesus Christ the son of God. Because he that believeth not on the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth in him.

The time to believe is now, when you hear. That is the appeal to you who have never believed.

How can I know that I have experienced the new birth.

Jesus' answer to that question,---"Not every one who sayeth unto me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven."

You can know by the fact that you are willing to do God's will. And while we may not understand the process whereby God begets a new life within us, we can and ought to know whether we have experienced this new birth. Either we believe God or we do not. He that believeth not God hath made him a liar. And we know that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed. 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 except they be sent? So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the

came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, we have spoken against the Lord and we have spoken against thee, pray unto the Lord that he will take away the serpents from us and Moses prayed for the people, and the Lord said to Moses make thee a fiery serpent and set it on a pole and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live, and Moses made of serpent of brass and put it upon a pole and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

Now this story was (well known) to Nicodemus. He thoroughly understand that the reason the fiery serpent was nailed to the pole was that the serpent is the (symbol of sin) That (brass) speaks of divine judgment as in the brazen altar. The (brazen serpent) is a type of Christ, made sin for us in bearing our judgment. And so we see, historically, the moment is indicated in the cry, 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me.' Christ's death atoned for our sins. For without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

This is the experience of a man in Philadelphia, who heard a minister preach, and then he said, "Call the officers of the church together for a meeting." and he said he would like for them to meet right then, and so they came together and this man who was a great manufacturer rose and said, "Gentlemen, for a long time, I have believed in Jesus Christ, but I have

never acknowledged him. Today when the minister was preaching, I thought the time had come, and before you here this morning, I acknowledge him as my Saviour. I have realized great assurance in him." And this is what Nicodemus realized --that Jesus presented to him the assurance that he was the son of God.

The second how of the new birth is a matter of obedience. Jesus clearly points out to Nicodemus that man's part is obedience to the command of God, that God's part is to do the supernatural in saving the soul. But as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up. The meaning was clear, the serpent was lifted up because something was wrong with the people. The people who were bitten by reptiles obeyed the command of God and looked upon the serpent. This was an act of faith. In like manner the son of man is lifted up on the cross, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life. This is an act of faith. The moment we believe, that moment, a dead soul is made a living soul. That is the new birth. We term it conversion or regeneration. Without it, we perish. The reason for the serpent of brass being nailed to the pole is God's love for sinning humanity. The reason for Christ's atoning death is God's love for sinning humanity. For God

so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

In New York City in one of the missions, a very distinguish man accepted Christ one night and the next day at the prayer meeting, he came bringing his little son named Joe. He was a sick child a crippled child, and a dying child. And he said, he does not have too long to live, but he said when I started to attend the mission, this boy said to me, "Father I cannot go to the meetings, but you can go and all the time you're gone, I will pray." I never came into the house at night that I did not hear the thud of his little crutch on the floor as he came to welcome me. The moment the door opened he would spring into his arms and say, "Did you come?" But last night he did not ask me, I heard him come to the door, as it opened, He sprang into my arms and buried his face on my shoulder, "You have come, you have come." and he said, My little boy won me. That is what Jesus meant about the working of the spirit. It is the very holy influence. It is through the prayers of a mother or a good wife. God calls through sermons and through other means, that man might turn instead of dying and be obedient unto the challenge of the spirit.

word of God. That is the surest way of knowing. Willing to do the will of God. The converted person is commanded to be baptized. The converted person is added to the church.

Now the danger is that you might be near the kingdom and yet not enter it. By one decision you might truly settle it all. An American preacher in Oregon used to tell this story about his conversion, he said that he was raised in a Christian home...his mother was a saint, his father was a church officer. He said, I was very near the kingdom but I did not yield until one night I heard a minister use the following illustration. He said that a man with tuberculosis left home for the mountains. And as usual in the country where the people having this would go to the mountains. And they were days of real suffering. And the man was discouraged and he said, I shall die, and so he started home. He sent a telegram to his home in the country, saying they would arrive on a certain train. But a storm came, the telegraphy wires were down, the train was delayed. His home was 3 miles from the country station. He reached the station about midnight, no one knew of his coming...the telegram was never delivered, the station was closed and the lights were out. His home was the nearest to the railroad. There was only one thing for him to do, he must fight his way through the storm.

He pushed through the snowdrifts until at last he saw a light in the window of his home. He passed through the gate and staggered up the walk. Just as he reached the steps of the door, he fell on his knees from faintness. With his hand upon the step of the door, he died. This minister said that he turned to the congregation and said that there may be some young man in this building with his hand upon the step of the door and someday the door will be shut. And then he said it was that he arose from his pew and hurried to make that decision of yielding and accepting Jesus Christ on the spot. Now that's what Jesus urged Nicodemus to do. not to tarry, not to wait until it was too late.

Almost is but to fail, almost cannot avail,  
 Sad, sad, that bitter wail, almost but lost.

This is the world's greatest need and it is your greatest need today, if you have not experienced it.

A certain train, but a train came, the telegraph wires were down, the train was delayed. His home was 3 miles from the country station. He reached the station about midnight, no one knew of his coming... the telegraph was never delivered, the station was closed and the lights were out. His home was the nearest to the railroad. There was only one thing for him to do, he must fight his way through the snow.