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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We are going to be looking at the interaction between Jesus and a man named Nicodemus.
- B. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a leader within the Sanhedrin. The Pharisees were the very most religious group within Jewish leadership. He would have been a very intelligent man, knowing nearly every word and phrase in the Old Testament.
- C. Though most of the Pharisees rejected Jesus, Nicodemus was very intrigued by the works of Jesus and so he visits Him at night in order to question Him. Coming to Jesus at night showed that he feared what others might think if a learned Pharisee was caught seeking understanding from a carpenter from Nazareth.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² 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.” (Jn. 3:1, 2)

- D. The works of Jesus either intrigued Nicodemus or he knew that Jesus actually was *from God*. We see him interacting with Jesus 3 times throughout the gospels, once here, another he defended the Lord saying that He must be tried (Jn. 7:50, 51), and the final time after Jesus had been crucified and was to be buried (Jn. 19:59).

II. BORN AGAIN

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

- A. The Pharisees believed that by their diligence to obey every single rule and command they would come into God’s kingdom. This too is our *natural state* without the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Natural man believes that he can get to God on his own. He thinks that he doesn’t need God to gain eternal life.
- B. Jesus slices to the heart of matter. Before Nicodemus can say another word Jesus cuts right to core, “**unless one is born again...**”
- C. Nicodemus is confused by that answer. He only knows what is natural and what is physical. He knows that when a baby is born, it has the nature of its mother; it will grow up, grow old and then die. Jesus seems to be indicating that someone must do what is impossible in order to enter the kingdom of God.
- D. What Jesus is implying is that it truly IS impossible to gain eternal life on our own. No amount of obedience or human goodness can gain God’s favor.

⁵ **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. (Jn. 3:5, 6)**

1. All that human effort can gain is humanity. The main problem with this is that humanity will perish. So all that work, all that effort to get to God, is wasted at death. It doesn't bring about anything. It's as dead and useless as a corpse.
¹³ No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. (Jn. 3:13)
 2. Jesus is saying that what you need is spirit. The cross and the way of Christ is a *spiritual thing*, you can't it through physical means. In order to inherit eternal spiritual life, you need spiritual means.
¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? (Jn. 3:12)
 3. He's saying, "Nicodemus, you're trying to earn eternal life. In your effort, the best that you can earn is natural man. You can't get what you're trying to get. The only way to get what you're trying to get is from God."
- E. Jesus instructs Nicodemus that the spiritual life is different from the physical life. Our physical life (mind/will/emotions/body/effort) are all things we can control, but were we to focus all of those entities on gaining eternal life it would never happen. We need a spiritual life. But before we live a spiritual life we must have a spiritual birth. Just as a baby must be born before living a physical life, so too, our spirits must be *born* before we begin living a spiritual life.
- F. A spiritual birth is *essential* to the Christian life. Without a spiritual birth, the person remains in their naturally decaying spiritual state. Through this new birth our nature is *reborn* and *regenerated*. The word regeneration used in the bible is from two words: *Palin* and *Genesis*¹. *Palin* essentially means "once more", while *Genesis* means "origin" or "beginning." When we put these two meanings together we have greater understanding of the word regenerated: the new birth means that we *begin again with a new start and a new nature.*

III. THE NATURE OF THE NEW BIRTH

- A. Paul makes some staggering claims about the nature of our new birth. It is a glorious and exciting reality. In 2 Corinthians he answers the question of how we receive this amazing gift called the new birth that Jesus spoke of.
¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died (the old nature); ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again... ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Cor. 5:14-17)
- B. When Christ died, he took with him those who of the old way. They, the old nature, died with Jesus and stayed buried in the ground. Then, when Jesus rose from the dead He brings with Him those who are born again.

¹ <http://biblehub.com/greek/3824.htm>

- C. ***if anyone is in Christ*** – every person that repents of their sin and confesses that Christ is God is considered *in Christ*. They have been brought into Him, into His nature; they will not die forever because Christ not die forever. There is much to say about being *in Christ* that we don't have time to cover.
- D. ***he is a new creation*** – what happened inside of the believer is so dramatically different than before that they are considered a ***new creation*** through Jesus. There is a radical change that has taken place, and we ought to see the evidences of that in behavior and love.
- E. ***old things have passed away*** – the old things speak of the old nature. Enslaved to sin, trying to earn God's favor, falling short in every way – that way is gone. It's passed away – this passed away is a reference to the death of Christ. His body died and was buried. So too, this old way has passed away, it's dead, no life, no power.
- F. ***behold, all things have become new*** – I love this word "*behold*." It's like Paul is saying, "Stop and think about this. Don't just breeze over it." Our spirit in Christ becomes new. All that relates to our spirit inside of us is now alive, rather than dead. Born anew.

IV. WALKING IN THE REALITY OF THE NEW BIRTH

- A. Often we are faced with the tension of our currently living condition and what is true about us. In other words, our reality is shaped mostly by what we *feel* rather than *what is true*. The scripture calls us to *renew our minds*.
² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...(Rom. 12:2)
...and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, (Eph. 4:23)
- B. This means that the old framework of thinking must be done away with; it does not happen automatically. There is a process involved that Paul called ***renewing*** our minds.
- C. Having undergone being born again by the spirit of grace, we are a new creation from God's perspective. This is a wonderful truth. But it is not something that is immediately believed and walked out by the Christian.
- D. The believer must begin renew their mind according the Word of God. What God says, and the way God views the Christian *must* become the way the Christian views himself if he is to walk in the power of the new birth reality.
- E. Paul tells us that through the cross a dramatic change has occurred. This truth is something that must be engaged in by the renewing of the mind.
⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:4)
 1. We were buried with Christ. The old man, the old way, the old slave went into the grave.

2. We were raised with Christ. This is the *new birth* or the *new creation* reality that the Word speaks of. It is a fact for those in Christ; this reality is not contingent upon our experience or currently living condition. God has said it, therefore it is true.
3. We therefore should walk in ***newness of life***. Now, we must engage in what has been accomplished. This is not a given. Tragically, many believers do not engage in the newness of life that has been granted them. They are saved and forgiven, but they do not live as though they are ***new***.

F. This is why the Christ must have their mind transformed. How do we do this? We must read and meditate upon the Word of God. As we read the truth of the scripture we talk to the Holy Spirit. We ask, “*Holy Spirit, write this truth on my heart. Let me believe what you’ve said about me.*”
⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. (Rom. 6:6)

⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. (Rom. 6:9)

¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:11)

- G. In the verse above Paul tells us *know* and to *reckon* ourselves. Again, this does not happen automatically at the moment of salvation. We must *understand* what has happened to us at the new birth; and we must *think of ourselves* in terms of those glorious realities.
- H. Through this process we will begin to engage in faith about his new condition from God’s perspective.

V. TRUTHS WE MUST KNOW – ROMANS 6

⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin...⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him...¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord...¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace...²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. (Rom. 6:6-22)

- A. A very practical way to renew our mind is to take passages like Romans 6 and put our names into it. We prayerfully declare these truths over ourselves when we are confronted with situations and emotions that are contrary to God’s Word.
- B. We pray, “*I have been crucified with Him; I am no longer a slave to sin. I will live with Christ. I am dead indeed to sin and alive to God...*” etc.