

NEW DAY... NEW WAY

What Even Teachers Must Learn

Text: John 3

INTRODUCTION: Graduates, I add my congratulations to those of our entire congregation upon your reaching this milestone in your life. I was thinking about you all the other day, and it dawned on me that you guys were in the fourth grade when Karen and I came to SABC. You are the little pecker woods who used to come down when I did the children's sermon before Miss Karen started doing Kidz Zone Live!

Well, here you are: high school graduates! But have you figured out yet that there are still things you don't yet know?

I just read this week about these two guys who were taking Chemistry and who did pretty well on all of the quizzes and the mid-terms and labs, etc., such that going into the final they had a solid A. These friends were so confident going into the final that the weekend before finals week (even though the Chemistry final was on Monday), they decided to go up to U Virginia and hang out with some friends up there.

They did this and had a great time. However, they stayed way too late on Sunday and didn't make it back to Duke until early Monday morning. Rather than taking the final then, they found their Professor after the final and explained to him why they missed the final. They told him that they went up to UVA for the weekend, and had planned to come back in time to study, but that they had a flat tire on the way back and didn't have a spare and couldn't get help for a long time and so were late getting back to campus.

The professor thought this over and then agreed that they could make up the final on the following day. The two guys were elated, relieved and very proud of their story. So, they studied that night and went in the next day at the time the professor had told them. He placed them in separate rooms and handed each of them a test booklet and told them to begin.

They looked at the first problem, which was something simple about molarity and solutions and was worth 5 points.

"Cool," they thought, "this is going to be easy." They did that problem and turned the page.

Then they saw the next question...

WHICH TIRE? (95 points)

That reminds me of a verse of Scripture. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." But that is not our text today.

However, it is not just college students who discover there are still things they do not know. Even teachers find out, often after they have been teaching for years, that they still have things to learn.

Such was a teacher we read about in the Gospel of John this week. His name was Nicodemus. A lot of good things could be said about Nicodemus. He was a good man, a moral man. He was a religious man and an honest, fair minded man. But all of those compliments paled in comparison to the one compliment he treasured most and it came in the form of a title people used to address him.

Everybody called Nicodemus Rabbi, which means teacher. Because Nicodemus was a teacher of the Scriptures, and people came to him daily asking about this and that. Nicodemus would try to tell them what the Scriptures said, especially what the law said.

So when Nicodemus went to talk with Jesus, he was surprised how quickly the tables were turned, and Nick became the one asking the questions.

John tells the story in John, Chapter 3.

John says,

John 3:1–10 ¹ 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.”

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.”

⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

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. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ 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.”

⁹ Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?”

Teacher Nicodemus still had things to learn.

Learned master Nicodemus still had to learn ...

I. HE NEEDED TO BE BORN AGAIN.

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

The Greek for “again” has a double meaning. It means “anew” and “from above.” Both meanings fit. A person must not only experience a second birth but the second birth, the one that

comes from above. **Two things Nicodemus could not do since he had not yet been born again:**

- a. v. 3 cannot see the Kingdom of God
- b. v. 5 cannot enter the Kingdom of God

But to whom does this apply besides Nicodemus?

Who else did Jesus include in His statement in John 3:3?

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

To us all!

Students and teachers
Janitors and college professors
Rich and poor
The brilliant and those not quite so

No person who has not experienced the new birth can neither enter nor even see the Kingdom of God. A seminary degree in theology, a perfect attendance record at church, a history of faithful financial support to Christian work, a good moral life, a religious awareness, kindness to others, are all insufficient to allow a person into God's Kingdom.

I tell you this not just for yourselves. Remember this applies to everybody you meet: at college, at work, new friends hanging out, a future husband or wife. No matter how smart, or how many degrees, or how great a person and how many accomplishments, everybody needs to be born again!

What else did Nick need to learn?

II. BEING BORN AGAIN WAS NOT SOMETHING HE COULD DO FOR HIMSELF.

A. Being born again is the work of the Spirit.

John 3:5–6 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.

B. It is not intuitive. It is mysterious.

1. Jesus said, "**Do not be concerned that you cannot see this new birth or fully understand it.** You cannot see the wind, yet it blows. You do not know where it comes from or where it goes, but you feel it. The Spirit works like that."

2. **You can know this is true**, not because you comprehend every detail, but **because the one person who knows heavenly things, who left heaven and will go back, tells you it is so.**"

C. Being born again is a work accomplished by God.

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

Jesus is referring to what happened to the Israelites as they journeyed through the wilderness, as is recorded in Numbers 21:4-9

**The Problem: Sin caused God to send serpents as chastisement.
Serpents biting Hebrews and killing them.**

What Moses did: Made a serpent; hung him on a pole.

The Point: It took the initiative and action of God to remedy the problem of sin and death for Israel in the wilderness.

It still does!

John 3:14-16 ¹⁴ 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.

The Problem: Sin is killing everybody.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What God did: Made Christ to be sin (2 Cor. 5:21) and hung Him on a cross.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The Point: For any of us to have salvation, the Father had to send the Son to die on the cross.

I have a light switch. How about I use the switch to turn on the choir lights. Graduates, could we go back a few years and pretend it's the children's sermon time again? What's wrong? Sure. The problem is that the switch is not connected.

Actually, to get light to shine down on the choir,

- The switch has to be connected to the wiring in the building.

- The wiring has to be connected to the power lines.
- Power lines go through transformers.
- Ultimately the power originates at the Power Generation Station.

So while the switch activates the power to the lights, it does not provide the power.

Friend, such it is with the new birth. **For any of us to be born again** into the Kingdom of God and consequently to live forever with the Lord, **God had to send His Son Jesus to pay the penalty for our sin** by dying on the cross.

One last time, let me ask, "What else did Nick need to learn?"

III. HE HAD A CHOICE TO MAKE.

Listen again to what Jesus told him.

John 3:16-18 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. ¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God

Back to the wilderness:

The Problem: Serpents biting Hebrews and killing them.

What Moses did: Made a serpent; hung him on a pole.

What the people did: They looked, and they were healed.

What Jesus was saying to Nicodemus:

The Problem: Sin is killing everybody.

What God did: Made Christ to be sin, and hung Him on a cross.

What the people must do: Look in faith; believe.

Look again at John 3:16-18. 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. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

What is the eternal status of those who trust in Christ? Not condemned

What is the eternal status of those who do not believe? Condemned already

Back to the light switch. What role does this tiny little light switch have in turning on the lights at SABC?

It has the same role as faith. The switch lets the power go through.

Now watch this: I use the switch to turn the lights off!
I use the switch to turn the lights on!

How does that work? Well it works because Derek is up there in the balcony making it work!

And how does my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord activate the power of God to cause me to be born again?

Because God is up there in heaven making it work.

He has done all the work of the cross. And now He promises that whoever believes in the Son will not perish but have everlasting life.

But each of us, and every person in the world, has a choice to make. God has done the cross and the wonderful salvation it provides is available to all, but faith lets the power of the cross come through to our lives, causing us to be born again.

CONCLUSION: Let me take you now to the close of this chapter in a summary statement.

John 3:36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

The two words rendered believe in our English text are actually two distinct words in the Greek.

- **The first "believes" means "trusts in," "depends on."**
- **The second "believes not" means "does not allow himself to be persuaded," "refuses to trust," "willfully disobeys."**

The act of believing in Jesus Christ is not a matter of merely knowing and mentally acknowledging certain facts concerning Him. It is trusting yourself and your eternal destiny to Him, completely and without reservation.