

XVI. Personal Evangelism in Biblical Perspective
iShare—Encounters with Jesus in John's Gospel
“The Encounter with Nicodemus”

John 2:23–3:15

Dr. Harry Reeder

June 10, 2012 – Morning Sermon

We are in John 3. For the necessity of clarity for this text there will be a couple of passages we will look at as we make our way through this encounter with Nicodemus in John 3 but I actually want to look at John 2 which I think is essential for John 3 to be understood. John 2:23-25 says ²³ *Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.* ²⁴ *But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people* ²⁵ *and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

This passage, I want to confess that I am unable to handle here what needs to be handled here and I’m asking the Holy Spirit to be gracious for your sake to go beyond my incapability. Secondly, in my studies I’ve had to leave a lot of things on the editing floor so much so that I hope to come back to study this doctrine of regeneration in greater detail later. In this study I’m just going to try and focus on its benefits to us in our iShare personal evangelism. I have been so overwhelmed in my study of this passage just because of its theological significance. In this text there is the issue of humility, boldness, worship and being propelled to worship addressed in the Christian life. How do we witness? In fact, in this text there is not only great insight theologically and personally in our own personal lives but there is assurance. For those who are sensitive in your right relationship and security in Christ but this text as much to say to you about assurance. It as much to say to you about why we worship, the God centered nature of worship. It has much to say to humble us, to give us boldness and courage in the call to serve Christ and make Christ known.

It is also a very practical text. It is very practical in terms of what is personal evangelism, what it is not, what you don’t do in personal evangelism. I’m very grateful for Dr. Barker’s message last week to take to us some examples and Biblical insight into evangelism and here is a text to add to what we have been studying in this iShare focus series. For instance, what evangelism is, what it is not, what must happen for it to be effective and why God gets all the glory in the salvation of sinners? This text is crucial in those areas but this text also cannot be understood without its context.

When the Bible was written it didn’t have the chapter divisions and verses like it does now. We put that in later to kind of help us locate things but sometimes those divisions get in the way a little bit. So for now I want you to take the John 3 chapter heading out of your mind because John 2:23-25 leads right into John 3. Jesus has the encounter at the wedding feast and one preacher called Jesus the Lord of the wine. Then Jesus had the encounter at the temple where He cleansed the temple and is called the Lord of the whip. Then it says He stayed for a period of time during the Passover, did a lot of miracles and many men believed in His Name because of the miracles that He was

doing. They didn't believe in Him as a Savior for their sins but they believed in Him as a miracle worker and they had a miracle fascination with Jesus but not regeneration.

Yet Jesus did not give Himself to them, why? It was because they didn't have a saving faith but a fleshly faith. They had a self-centered faith. They didn't have a saving faith with Christ but a self-fascination with Christ. We are told that He knows the hearts of men and He doesn't need anyone to bear witness to Him what is in the heart of men. The reason I read John 2 was after making that statement 'Jesus knows the hearts of men' He gives you two more encounters with one in John 3 and one in John 4 of how He ministered to people because He knew their heart. How did Jesus deal with Nicodemus, the religious man? How did Jesus deal with the woman at the well? In other words, John 3 and 4 are set up with the fact that Jesus knows the hearts of men.

John 3 with Nicodemus is set up very specifically. I started off with the text that said "Many people believed in Him because of His miracles" (not saving faith but miracle fascination faith) and then in John 3 we have a case study of one of those men. In other words the end of John 2 made a general statement and John 3 tells us now here is one man in particular that came from that statement. Nicodemus is selected as a lesson for us has Jesus has this encounter with him. So let's meet Nicodemus and let's look in John 3. Nicodemus is one of the men who is drawn to Jesus because He is a miracle worker.

John 3:1-2 says ¹ *Now 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."* So here are men who are curious and fascinated about Jesus and believe in Him as a miracle worker because multiple miracles were done over a period of time at the Passover while He was in Jerusalem. Here is one man as a case study, Nicodemus. There are five things He tells us about Nicodemus in those two verses we just looked at.

The first thing is Nicodemus was a man who was impressed, interested and observant about Jesus. He had seen many miracles Jesus had done. We don't know how many but we do know more than one miracle was done. Nicodemus is impressed with what Jesus has done. He is interested in what Jesus has done and he's impressed with the miracles that he has been observing over a period of time.

The second thing about Nicodemus is that he is not only a religious man but a top of the line religious man. He is a Pharisee. These are the people who went out and counted the leaves on their plants and pulled every tenth one to tithe it. Jesus also called these people hypocrites. So here are people who are impressive in their religious religiosity yet Jesus said their hearts are far from Me. Pharisees were the religions most admired and amazing among the people at that time.

The third thing about Nicodemus is he is a man who is powerful. This is a man of power. He is a ruler. He is a member of the Sanhedrin. In terms of power among the Jewish community you don't get any higher than this.

The fourth thing about Nicodemus is not only is he a teacher but he is famous. Nicodemus says to Jesus "You are a teacher from God, for no one can do these miracles unless God has sent them." Nicodemus has pretty well got his theology straight. Today, we say "Come to Jesus and you can do miracles." No, the Bible is very clear. Jesus does miracles that create wonder that are signs but not everyone is a miracle worker. The

Bible says that those whom God has specially called to reveal Himself, Prophets and Apostles were given the power to be miracle workers. Nicodemus has his theology straight. He says “You couldn’t be doing these miracles unless God has sent you as a Prophet. You are sent from God and that’s why you have the ability to do these miracles.” So he has theological insight. He is a teacher of theology and he knows his Bible and he’s famous.

Here’s a man who comes up to Jesus and says “You’re a teacher from God.” Jesus, you are A teacher from God, meaning one of many teachers from God. Later on, Jesus will say to Nicodemus “Are you THE teacher of Israel and don’t know these things?” In other words, Nicodemus had some elevated status. He was the teacher. Of all the teachers, Pharisees, Rabbis, he had some status that Jesus affirms as ‘THE teacher of Israel.’ So he is a teacher and he’s famous.

Fifthly, he is curious and he wants to know. By the way, he not only wants to know but there are a lot of people who want to know. He just was chosen. For those who have multiple children, have you ever noticed how the older ones know how to get the younger ones to go ask the questions? That’s what has happened to Nicodemus. John 3:2a says ² *This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God...”* Nicodemus isn’t the only one that’s overwhelmed but what Jesus has been doing. There are a number people who are overwhelmed with what Jesus has been doing and they have said to Nicodemus, “You go ask. Go find out.” So Nicodemus is kind of the representative to come to satisfy their curiosity about Jesus being a teacher. By the way, he is also very careful for when does he come? He comes at night. No one sees him. He comes at night clandestinely to find out about Jesus. So that is what we find out about Nicodemus.

Now let’s look at the encounter itself between Jesus and Nicodemus. It has three stages – where Jesus makes a statement and Nicodemus responds. There are three stages in the encounter. Let’s look at stage one. John 3:3 says ³ *Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless **one** is born again (literally born from above) he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* By the way, in the Greek from the word ‘truly’ we get the word ‘amen’ from it. If the preaching is faithful to God’s Word we say ‘amen’ but when Jesus preaches He doesn’t put the ‘amen’ afterwards He puts the ‘amen’ in front and He doesn’t put just one but two. He says “Amen, amen, I say to you...” this just isn’t anybody but this is Jesus.

Here Jesus knows what Nicodemus is asking, “Are You the Messiah? Are You the King of the Kingdom that God has promised?” Jesus basically says to Nicodemus “You can’t even see the Kingdom unless you’re born from above.” We need to work this phrase ‘born from above’ into our language. It means born again. The theological term we use is regeneration. It means to get a new heart, not a patch up job but cutting out an old heart and giving you a new heart. It is called being born again, born of the Spirit, born from above, the second birth. He says that unless that happens to you that you can’t even see the Kingdom of God, much less know the King.

That’s pretty abrupt, isn’t it? It’s not like saying “Let me tell you how water turns into wine.” Here is some bread and I’m the Bread of Life. Here is some water. Drink this Water and you’ll never get thirsty again. Jesus kind of comes along side and takes an illustration, a metaphor and works with the woman at the well but this one is a Mennen Skin Bracer iShare moment. The old commercial for Mennen Skin Bracer has a man

standing there and a woman would come up and slap him in the face. He would say “Thanks I needed that” and then it goes on to say that is the experience you get with Mennen Skin Bracer. I never quite understood how you could sell aftershave lotion by slapping someone. It’s like buy our aftershave and it’s like getting slapped in the face every day. This moment isn’t one of those casual conversational moments but this is BOOM “Are you the teacher and you don’t know this???” Nicodemus you can’t even see the Kingdom of God unless you’re born again!”

Nicodemus then responds. Look at his response to this first statement. John 3:4 says 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?”* Let me translate. “Jesus how can that happen? You must be talking about a *real* miracle. Is it possible? Can I get back in my mother’s womb and be born a second time?” Jesus basically says “No, no Nicodemus, you can’t see or understand for you don’t even know what I’m talking about unless you’re born again. You’re thinking that I’m talking about a physical birth but I’m not talking about that. I’m talking about a birth from above.”

So He then goes to a second statement to edit, clarify and add to what He said to Nicodemus the first time for him to understand. John 3:5-7 says ⁵ *Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, 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.’* Basically Jesus is telling him he shouldn’t be amazed at this. He should be aware of this. Jesus tells him He is not talking about repeating the natural birth (flesh is flesh) but a supernatural birth, a birth from above by the Holy Spirit. Specifically you must be born of the water and the Spirit. What in the world does He mean by that?

This deserves much more than I can give you on this because there are some whole branches in Christianity that say Jesus is talking about baptism here and that when you’re baptized you are born again. If that’s the case why would He expect Nicodemus to already know what He is talking about, because Christian baptism has not been instituted yet? Christian baptism is instituted by our Lord at the Great Commission so it can’t be talking about baptism. Here is another way to look at it. The Apostle Paul says in I Corinthians “I didn’t come to baptize but I came to preach the Gospel.” Paul is not demeaning baptism but he is saying that baptism is downstream (pardon the pun) from preaching. If you don’t get preaching right, baptism and the Lord’s Supper are meaningless. If baptism was necessary to save people, why would the Apostle Paul brag about not baptizing? Why would Paul leave off the very thing that would bring the New Birth if baptism brings the New Birth? So clearly He is not talking about baptism.

Is He talking about the physical birth? So isn’t the water referring to the first birth where you’re incased in the womb in the waters? The only problem with that is the Bible says that the flesh profits nothing (John 6:63). The Bible tells us that being born the first time is not an asset. In fact, it introduces us into a life of sin. So I don’t think He is talking about physical birth.

What is He talking about? It is something that Nicodemus should have already known. He should have known Ezekiel 36 that says “There is a New Covenant coming and the Messiah will bring it. When that New Covenant comes there will be a new people not only from Israel but from all the nations and they will be brought into a new land called the Kingdom of God and you’ll know them through the sign of sprinkling

clean water upon them. That represents them being cleansed from all their idols and they will have My Spirit within them. They will now walk in My Statues.” He is saying being cleansed of the water is referring to what the Holy Spirit does with the Word of God when you’re born again. He begins to cleanse you of your idolatry for all sin is rooted in idolatry. When you’re born again the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit begins to cleanse us. It’s the washing of the water with the Word. The Holy Spirit is poured out to empower us so that we can see and enter, then the Holy Spirit begins from that new heart to cleanse our lives. He is talking about the washing of the water with the Word.

I want to show you a New Testament counterpart to the Ezekiel passage. I want to look in Titus 3. Here Paul is making the same statement. Titus 3:4-7 says ⁴ *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,* ⁵ *he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,* ⁶ *whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,* ⁷ *so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* So you can’t see or enter the Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit comes upon you. The Holy Spirit renews you so that you can see Christ. You enter the Kingdom by faith, not by works and when you come He begins to wash you with the power of regeneration. He begins to cleanse you of all of your idols. He does that work to grow you. He is not saying Christians are perfect but being washed and purified even as they are empowered to come to Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is in the second encounter.

Now let’s go back to John 3. He tells Nicodemus not to marvel that you must be born again and then He begins to explain the Holy Spirit’s work. John 3:8 says ⁸ *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*” He gives an illustration here about the birth from above that takes place and empowers you so that you can see and enter the Kingdom of God. It begins to wash you with the water of the Word and it’s like the wind. He is also doing a word play here. The word for wind is the same word as spirit. It’s the word *pneuma* and its translated wind, breath, spirit. Here He is talking about the wind and we know that because He uses the pronoun it. If He was talking about the Spirit He would use ‘he’. He is using the wind as an illustration of the Holy Spirit. So He says “the wind blows” meaning the Holy Spirit is working. Just as the wind blows the Holy Spirit is working.

Secondly, the wind blows where it wishes. The Holy Spirit like the wind blows where He wishes. It is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Then He says you don’t know where He comes from. You and I don’t originate the Holy Spirit. One, we can’t manipulate Him. He blows where He wishes. Two, we don’t originate Him. He is sent by Jesus, not by us and not only origination but destination. We don’t know where the wind comes from and we don’t know where it’s going. We can’t originate the Holy Spirit and we can’t direct the Holy Spirit. God is sovereign. The Holy Spirit moves. He blows and moves by the sovereign decree of the Father. He is headed to the sovereign decree of the Father. He blows in a certain direction that God Himself in His wisdom has ordained and when He blows you can’t see Him but you can see the effects of His presence. When the wind blows you can’t see it but you feel it and you hear it. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Everyone who is born of the Spirit was born of the Spirit because God sovereignly sent the Holy Spirit to them and God sovereignly originated and sent the Holy Spirit to work in their life. God sovereignly has determined the end of that work, where the Holy Spirit is taking them. God is sovereignly working in their life and you can't manipulate Him. He is moving among His people and as He moves among His people here is the freewill of God moving upon the imprisoned will of man. I'm a free moral agent but my will is in the prison of my sin. I can't see or enter the Kingdom. The Holy Spirit comes freely moving by the sovereign hand of God. As He moves He is sent from God. He moves upon His people and I can't see Him but I can feel His effects as He gives sight to see, the ability to enter. Those who couldn't enter can now enter the Kingdom of God. Those who couldn't see can now see. They were blind but now they see. They were lost but now they're found. They were deaf but now they hear. They were outside the Kingdom and could not enter but now they can through the King Himself, Jesus Christ.

I will try to illustrate this. When Cindy and I were first married and we finished getting her through school, I went back to East Carolina. One of the jobs I had was working for a fellow who owned our apartment and he was a tobacco farmer. I worked in those fields, sheeting tobacco and pulling tobacco. I remember being in Greenville, North Carolina in August pulling tobacco in the still of a hundred degree weather begging for a breeze and you can't manufacture it. You can't make it come because I tried. It was so hot and there wasn't a breath of air. You just can't make the wind come. Believe me I tried, but brother when that little zephyr (wind) comes you feel it. You hear it and you see it, so it everyone who is born of the Spirit. No one sent the Holy Spirit other than the sovereign grace of God to set you free. Thank You Lord!

When He sent the Holy Spirit, no one else originated Him but Jesus. He has sent the Holy Spirit to do His purpose in your life. No one directs Him. He has sent the Holy Spirit and the sensation of His presence is all around His people as He empowers them and brings them from death unto life. They can see, enter, follow, surrender and the washing of the idolatry of their life begins to take place with the power of the Word of God in the hands of the Spirit. That's what Jesus says to Nicodemus. What is Nicodemus' response to that second statement? It is in John 3:9 which says ⁹*Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"*

Then Jesus responds with His third statement in John 3:10-15 which says ¹⁰*Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?"* ¹¹*Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.* ¹²*If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?* ¹³*No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.* ¹⁴*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,* ¹⁵*that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*

In other words, God in His grace has sent Me. No one climbed up into heaven but heaven has come down for you. Nicodemus, remember that story you teach so much from the Old Testament? When the people out of their sin were bitten by the serpents, the cure was the lifting up of the serpent on the cross, then so must the Son of Man be lifted up. I have come to go to a cross. On that cross He who knew no sin becomes sin on our behalf and as you gaze to Him and trust in Him by faith, you are delivered from

your sins. How can this happen? It is because God has sent Me and because of Me on that cross I send the Holy Spirit and you can see Me and follow Me to the Kingdom of God. Then Nicodemus has no response. At least, not right now for he is silent when he hears these last words.

Here is a takeaway for us. Number one we have theological clarity here. We are going to share the Gospel with people, right? There are two things you need to know from this text. Number one, every single person you are sharing your faith with cannot come to Christ unless they are born again. Do you know why? It is because they are dead in their sins. They can't see and they can't enter. We bring the Gospel because God commands us to but they can't come unless God sets them free from the bondage of their sin. When Jesus told the people to come and follow Him they said "We can't follow You because we must first go bury our dead." Jesus said to them, "Let the dead bury the dead." Have you ever seen a physically dead person burying another dead person? He is saying let the spiritually dead be consumed with that but you come to Me and live. Let the dead bury the dead.

Ephesians 2:1 says "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins." It goes on to say in Ephesians 2:4-5, ⁴ *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,* ⁵ *even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—* In another translation it says "He caused you to be born again to a living Hope." So the first theological clarity is that everyone we share the Gospel with will not come to Christ until Christ comes to them by the Holy Spirit and sets them free.

The second theological clarity is you can't set them free. You can bring Christ and you can pray for them but you can't convert them. You can't make them born again. You can't give them life. It is impossible but what is impossible with man is possible with God (Luke 18:27). So when you and I are sharing our faith with people we are coming to people like Nicodemus who can't see or enter, bound up in their sin, can't come to Christ and we can't send the Holy Spirit or do the work of the Holy Spirit or cause them to be born again. There is the freewill of God and God blows where He wishes. The Holy Spirit blows where He wishes but when He blows you'll see it. The deaf will get ears, the blind will get sight and they will come to Jesus Christ. Then you and I will give praise to God because these aren't our converts and they didn't convert themselves.

We didn't bring them a Gospel, give them a prod and they said "I heard the Gospel so let me come to Jesus." That didn't happen. What happens when you prod a corpse? Nothing happens. We brought the Good News of the Gospel and if they got up and came to Christ, praise God from whom all blessings flow. Here is a brand plucked from the fire. Here was a walking spiritual zombie, dead that was eating itself alive, and they have been brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ. We will give praise to God because God saved them from their sins. It came from Him. It came to them and brought them to Him and we had the opportunity to be instruments but it was the Holy Spirit who did the work with His word and thanks be to God who has set them free! That's what happens when we're sharing the Gospel. These aren't notches on our belt. These are glorious trophies of grace purchased by Christ and brought by the Spirit of God.

Most of us think were sinners out there in the ocean of sin, floundering away and then we come with iShare and throw a life preserver. Wrong! We are not in an ocean of

sin floundering away. We are at the bottom of the ocean with a ten thousand pound rock on top of us and we are utterly lost, bound and dead but when the Gospel came the Spirit of God came and took the rock off of you. He brought you up and gave you life. We think when sharing the Gospel in intensive care units where people are on life support, they get up and leave their life support system when they get the Gospel. People are not sin sick they are sin dead. When we bring the Gospel we're not going to an intensive care unit in the hospital. We are going to the morgue and such were we.

Do you see what that does to humility? How can we get out of sorts personally? God can bring judgment but I can't because I was where they were. They only reason I am where I am is because the Holy Spirit came, took me, and brought me there. It wasn't that I got a little prod and came to Jesus or a good coach that was able to explain the Gospel or preacher that did it. It was the Holy Spirit that came who gave me eyes to see and ears to hear. Now I've been set free and look at the humility that causes in our evangelism. Look at the boldness that it causes because it is the Lord who does the work not us. Look at the freedom it brings. We speak passionately, persuasively and we're willing to go to places and die for people to know Christ but it's not our death that saves them. It's Christ's death and the Holy Spirit who brings them. So now we have that perspective of theological clarity where God gets the glory. We plant, we water and God does the increase.

Practically what does this mean in my evangelism? I want to share three things with you practically. Because of these truths I can't save someone for only the Holy Spirit can do it, then what should I do? Number one, I need to pray. My prayers do not direct the Holy Spirit but the Holy Spirit works through the prayers of His people. God has ordained that so I am going to pray for the people that I am sharing with. I am going to pray for the Holy Spirit to work in me, to work through other people and to give them eyes to see and ears to hear. This isn't a matter of just me perfecting my technique. I need Divine intervention. We need a miracle here. So we will pray.

The second practical thing in evangelism is that we will bring the Word of God to them. Peter says "You've not been born again by perishable seed but by the imperishable Seed of the living and abiding Word of God" (I Peter 1:23). I can't originate the Holy Spirit but I can bring the Word which is what the Holy Spirit always does and uses. I can't open minds, eyes, or ears but I can open the Word of God and the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God. So I pray for the Holy Spirit and I share the Word of God. The Bible says to put no confidence in the flesh for it is the Spirit who gives life. My Words are Spirit and life. God's Word and God's Spirit are entwined together. So I pray for the work of the Holy Spirit through me and on them and I bring the Word which points them to Christ.

Thirdly, what else do I do? The very last thing Jesus says to Nicodemus is "What does this mean, don't marvel at it, just know this is true." That's why the Son of Man must be lifted up. It is because the Spirit of God points to Christ. The Word of God explains Christ, so what do I do in evangelism? I lift up Jesus. I lift up Christ. Look unto Him. When they looked to that serpent on that pole God removed the poison of the serpents that had bitten them. When you gaze upon Jesus it is Christ who removes the penalty of your sin, frees you from the power of sin and begins to change your life from the very presence of sin in your life. In evangelism, we are thankful for the church but we don't lift up the church. We are thankful for the effects of the Gospel but we don't lift

up the effects. What we do is we lift up Jesus Christ. We exalt Him. Practically our evangelism is prayer, the Word and to lift up Jesus. He says “If I be lifted up I will draw all men (through the Holy Spirit) to Myself.”

Finally with that practicality and that helpfulness, there is a penetrating reality. I said in the walkthrough of this text that there were three statements from Jesus and two responses from Nicodemus and then I said that Nicodemus on Jesus’ third statement didn’t respond – not yet. Two years later at a Passover Jesus will come and Jesus, the Lamb of God will go to the cross. On that day, Nicodemus responds along with Joseph of Arimathea. His new birth occurs.

When babies are born these days we have the chance to be in the delivery room and when the baby comes what are you listening for? What are you looking for? When that baby is born you want to hear a cry. How do you know the Holy Spirit has come? What do you see? What do you feel? What do you hear? They confess they are sinners. I’m a sinner. I’m undone and I can’t save myself. God be merciful to me the sinner! They confess Christ! The cry of the new birth is confession. They confess they are sinners. We confess Christ as our only Hope. Then we confess surrender – I’m Yours, You are mine and I am Yours. We surrender to Him. That is the cry of the new birth that you are looking for. It is just like the thief on the cross and Nicodemus. That is what happened.

I want to make this point with you in closing. Let’s look at I John 5. I want to close with this last thought of clarity. I pick up survey after survey and this is what the survey’s say, “Born again Christians divorce as much as unbelievers. Born again Christian’s children are no different.” Here is what they are doing. They go to churches where people preach about people being born again and then they do an analysis that says the statistics are the same for born again Christians. That is a lie from the pit of hell. That is a lie. Born again Christians are not the same. They may be members of churches that preach about being born again but that doesn’t mean they are born again. We say “Oh you say you’re born again but you’re living like this, okay you need to buck up and do better.”

The Bible says if we’re born again we have a new destination and there is a new transformation in your life. No Christian is perfect and we do have entangling sins but those who are born again are different, not perfect, different. They have to struggle with sin within them and a struggle with it outside of them but they are more than conquerors in Christ. Being born again shows up with a changed heart and life. It is not perfection but a changed heart and life. Now I want to look at I John 5.

I John 5:1 says ¹*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.* If you believe in Christ you have been born again. Now I John 5:4 says ⁴*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith.* Is this done with perfection? No, no, no, no, no! Christians are not sinless but Christians are changed if they are born again. They have a changed heart. They have a changed desire. If there is no change the answer isn’t to be better to be born again, the question is, have you been born again?

Let’s look at I John 3:8-10 which says ⁸*Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* ⁹*No one born of God makes a practice of*

sinning (It doesn't say they don't sin but a practice of sinning), *for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.* ¹⁰ *By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*

Where the wind blows there is a sensation. There's a change. There is a washing that takes place, not perfection until we get to be with the Lord but there is a change that takes place. Nicodemus was religious but he wasn't converted. Nicodemus was powerful but he was impotent. Nicodemus was curious but he was lost. Nicodemus was a Christ admirer but he was not a Christ follower. Nicodemus was impressed but he was lost. Nicodemus was insightful but he did not know the Lord. He was knowledgeable but he was ignorant. Then the Holy Spirit came and Nicodemus came to Christ and so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

This doctrine makes people angry only when we think God's grace is dependent upon us. We don't like to hear about the freewill of God. We think we should have a hand in it but when you know what you do is because God came and intervened in you, it will transform everything. It's not a praise team, a choir, a choir leader and all the accoutrements that bring us to worship but it is this; I was lost, now I'm found, I was blind, now I see. I was in a morgue and Jesus came by the Holy Spirit and set me free. I will worship Him, love Him, confess Him, and bear Him to the world for this will humble us, embolden us and set us free because Christ has done all in us and now we desire to all for Him. He has come. He by His Spirit has set us free. We might have been religious, in adultery, respectable, powerful or with down and outers but wherever we were we could not have come to Him but He came for us. When He did come for us He set us free. That will change your life and my life forever. Praise God salvation is from the Lord! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together. I am grateful for the kind patience for these people in the study of this text but Father, I just ask and pray that You will take this for there are people today who need to have some assurance. They are looking into their life wondering if they have done enough or if they are well enough and Father, let them now see that He who began a good work in them will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. The sovereign Spirit came and He has a destination He is taking them to. Please give them the assurance that is rooted in Christ and then Father, give us lives that show forth the excellency of Christ and then as we're sharing Christ help us have humility with those whom we are talking to for they are dead and we are bringing to them a Word of Life. We are praying Holy Spirit to come and set them free and we are lifting up Christ who sets men free when He is lifted up. Father, transform us in how we see ourselves and then transform us that we might be used to see others come to Christ and when they do, it wasn't us, it wasn't our plan, it wasn't our method or any of those things. We want to be good at what we do. We want to be effective. We want to be persuasive but Father it was You. You sent Your Son who sent the Spirit and the wind blew and men and women came to life. Thank You for setting us free. Thank You that we can take this message to others, in Jesus' Name, Amen.