

GOD'S INVITATION:

How to Become a Christian

“What it Takes to Get it Right”

The Second Movement – The Instrument of the New Birth – John 3:8

The first movement of the Symphony of Salvation here in John 3—we've likened this to a symphony of music—we saw a guy by the name of Nicodemus who was the epitome of wealth, success, fame, popularity and religion in the city of Jerusalem.

He was an outstanding, distinguished gentleman and he comes to Jesus Christ because there's something still missing in his life. He's had all the success that life could offer. He's probably 65 or 70 years of age at this point. He's had just about everything that everybody dreams of accomplishing in their lifetime. And yet he has found that none of these seem to have the answer that he's really looking for and he's been created for.

He comes to Jesus Christ and in his dialogue we find the basic essential. He hears three times in the first movement of the symphony—verse 3, verse 5 and verse 7—the same message. And that is, if we're going to start in a relationship with God, it's going to come by the New Birth.

Now we tried to define the New Birth. In our definition of the New Birth we pointed out the fact that first of all, the New Birth is starting all over again brand new with God. It's entering into a relationship when we accept the provision of His Son that starts us all over brand new. This is really something where a lot of people lose out. They never do come to the place where they start in a brand new relationship.

Secondly, to be experiencing the New Birth would mean that we would step out of the realm of independence into the realm of dependence.

We would realize that as far as we're concerned, if it were dependent upon us, we would never be able to experience eternal life. That in us, our abilities and capacities—no matter how good, how moral or how upstanding we could be in living a life—we could not absolutely beyond the realm of possibility gain eternal life by the kind of life we could live by ourselves.

This is underscored in many passages of scripture. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done"—Titus 3:5.

Ephesians 2:9

For by grace you've been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God not of works lest we be boasting about it.

And then thirdly, we discovered that the New Birth was not anything that we could do anything about. Just like our

physical birth, we were brought into the world when we made a move and our mother and the doctor brought us into this world. And God, when we make a move toward Him in faith in realizing our need of Him, performs the New Birth within us.

Nicodemus has heard that in this first movement, the absolute necessity of the New Birth—verses 3, 5 and 7—and now in this eighth verse.

We're going to look at one verse and zero our thoughts in on that. In this eighth verse He tells us the instrument that God uses to perform this New Birth.

Now let's say for the same of illustration that a jet crashes in the middle of the Pacific. When a jet goes down, there are three guys that bail out safely in the water. One of them is an Olympic Gold Medal swimmer. The second guy is just a normal mediocre swimmer. And the third guy only knows a few strokes. Now what do you think these three guys ought to do in order to gain the life—the physical life—that they need in this crisis situation?

Should the Gold Medal winner teach a few strokes to the guy that knows only a few and hope that he can rescue him through the process? In this kind of situation, the guy who can swim—the Gold Medal swimmer—will probably last about 15 hours and he'll drown. The mediocre swimmer will probably last about 2 hours and he'll drown. And the guy that only knows a few strokes will last about 20 minutes and he'll drown.

Every one of these guys is in need of help beyond themselves. Their abilities won't make it. That is the same way in our approach to God. It doesn't matter how good we are, how much we've done for the cause of God, how much we've given or how much we've been involved in time, energy and effort. Friend, that doesn't count. If God thought that for a moment we could gain our own salvation, He would not have needed to take the drastic measures of sending Jesus Christ into the world to go to the Cross.

Nicodemus is hearing that. The world needs a Savior. There are some very good people and they would be represented by the Olympic Gold Medal swimmer. And then there are some people that are sort of shaky. Sometimes they're good and sometimes they're bad, but they're neither really good nor bad. Those people are like the normal average person.

Then there are some guys that are just bent on being bad. They have a few good moments in their life. When we grade society that way and we look at society as a whole, the society is hopeless apart from the activity of the Savior to make it possible for them to have life.

Now having said that, let's look at this eighth verse.

v. 8 "The wind is blowing where it is desiring (to blow) and you are hearing the sound of it, but you are not knowing from where it is coming and where it is

going: so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.”

“The wind is blowing where it is desiring (to blow) and you are hearing the sound of it, but you are not knowing from where it is coming and where it is going: so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.”

In other words, it is the Spirit of God who is the giver of eternal life in answer to our faith. And the Spirit of God here is likened to a “wind.”

Now when the wind came and the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 2, Peter describes the coming of the promised Spirit upon His followers as they were preparing to leave Him. The Spirit of truth was like a mighty wind in verse 1.

When the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place and then suddenly there came from heaven the sound of a rushing of a mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting. (see Acts 2:1-4)

Now Jesus had told His followers when they were gathered in the Upper Room the Spirit of God was going to come. The Spirit of God was going to have a special ministry. He was going to have a ministry of making it possible for us to understand the scripture. Here is another function of the Spirit—He is the giver of life when we by faith reach out and accept the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.

In other words, Nicodemus—if we put it in laymen’s terminology—Jesus would be saying, “Nicodemus, it’s not what you do. It’s what the Spirit of God does in your life that makes the difference.”

Now it’s interesting that He would liken the Spirit of God to a “wind.” Over and over in the Word of God we see several references to this. The Spirit of God is like a “wind” in Job 33:4

Job 33:4

The Spirit of God hath made me and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

John 6:63

It is the Spirit that makes alive, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life.

And then back in verse 5 He says:

John 3:5

Most assuredly, I am saying unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he is not able to enter into the Kingdom of God.

Genesis 1:2, at the time of the creation of the world we read:

Genesis 1:2

...and the Spirit of God brooded (or hovered) over the face of the waters.

In anticipation of life being created and of a world coming into existence.

The Spirit of God is that life-giver. The Spirit of God has that function of regeneration or giving of life if we want to use a theological term.

“Now Nicodemus, if you’re going to know anything about the New Birth, it’s going to be by the Spirit of God—not anything that you can do. And the Spirit is likened to a wind.” Now that’s instructive. We can’t see a wind, but we can sure tell what wind does.

In the state of Texas lots of winds come and lots of winds go. And we can sure see the devastation as a result of the power of the wind.

The Spirit is like a “wind.” It is sovereign. It blows where it desires to blow. We can hear the sound of it but we can’t see the wind. We can see what the wind does.

So the Spirit of God blows in the hearts of people. The Spirit of God is saying to our heart, in bearing witness to our heart right now, that this is what we need. This is something that ought to happen to us. We should experience the New Birth.

Now we can quiet that voice and get up and go on about our business and forget that the Spirit of God spoke to us in these moments. But He has that prerogative of bringing us to a particular place and a particular location to say something to us. When we hear it we have a real choice. Are we going to act upon it, be submissive to the operation of His Spirit in our life? Or not?

So Nicodemus is going to have the same choice. We're going to see what happens to Nicodemus a little bit later in the passage.

Some of us are already Christians and have experienced the New Birth. It would be instructive for us to also know how the Spirit of God blows in our heart and how He functions in our life since we've become a Christian.

The Spirit's function in our life as a Christian is to give us assurance that we're really a Christian. A lot of people don't have the assurance that they really are Christians. They question, they really wonder. And one of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to give us assurance, that we are His child.

Romans 8:16, 17

The Spirit Himself bears witness with my spirit that I'm the child of God...

The very fact that He's there in our life, bearing witness with our spirit that we are His child is the basis for our assurance

that our eternal destiny is going to be with Him.

Secondly, He is the one who has been given to guide us into truth. Jesus said, “Now fellas, I’m getting ready to check out on you. I’m going back to glory but I’m not going to leave you alone. I’m going to send you the Spirit.”

John 16:13

He is the one who is going to guide you into all truth.

Thirdly, He is the one who gives us power for service.

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you’ll be witnesses.

Acts 1:8—the last words that Jesus ever spoke—“you shall receive power.”

Feel pretty weak in our ability to relate our faith? It’s not God’s fault. It’s a power failure in our own life, not the fact that there is a power failure as far as God is concerned. The Spirit of God is available for that.

Thirdly, it is the Spirit’s function in our life to energize this new nature, this new quality of life that’s within.

In Galatians chapter 5 verses 16, 17, 22 and 23, we discover

that once we become a Christian a new capacity for living dwells within. How does that new capacity manifest itself? How do we manifest to other people that we have love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness—all these fruitages of the Spirit?

We don't. The Spirit of God manifests those qualities through our life so we're not running around frustrated trying to love everybody.

We're not running around trying to be joyful like some jerk with his head cut off. We're not running around trying to be patient when we're not patient. We're not running around trying to be self-disciplined when we're not self-disciplined. It's a function of the Spirit of God who dwells within.

Now there are several other things that the Spirit does:

1. He functions in our lives, according to 1 Corinthians 12:4-8, in the gifts which He gives us.
2. He places us in the body of Christ—1 Corinthians 12:13.
3. He conforms us to the image of His Son—Philippians 1:6.
4. The Spirit of God prays for us—Romans 8:26, 27.
5. The greatest of all of them is as a Christian He has sealed us. This means and denotes ownership. The seal of the Spirit of God upon our life determines our eternal destiny. He has

sealed us by His Spirit, guaranteeing that He's going to deliver us to eternity.

It's all His responsibility and His reputation is at stake if we don't make eternity, and so it all becomes His full responsibility.

Now the main thing that we're talking about here though is about someone who's not a Christian. Nicodemus, a very religious individual, has not experienced a relationship to Jesus Christ. How is this giver of life going to function in his life?

There are just three things that this Spirit of God does in the life of a person in anticipation of them becoming one of His children. This is seen in John 16: 7-11. Here the Lord Jesus tells those men in the Upper Room that the Spirit of God, when He comes, is going to have the function of convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

Convicting of sin—the Spirit of God's function is for us to come to the Cross of Christ and see that Jesus Christ was on that Cross, not because He had to but because of our sin. Because we failed, because we blew it, because we went astray, because we forged our own course, we lived our own life. We accept the analysis of Scripture that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (ref. Romans 3:23)

It is the Spirit's responsibility to show us our sin. And when we stand at the foot of the Cross we can say:

“O God in heaven, the guilt is mine!
I crucified Your Son divine.”
Let mercy’s door be open wide,
‘Tis God’s own Son I’ve crucified.
(source unknown)

We’re responsible for Him hanging there. “You get down off of there and let me get up there! I’m the one that deserves that because You’re taking the judgment of a holy God for my sin!”

The Spirit of God is to convict of righteousness. How does He do that? He convicts of righteousness in that He shows us the life of Christ is how our lives should really be lived. He convicts us of righteousness in showing us the Law and how far we fall short of His righteous standard.

All have sinned and come short. We’ve failed. We’re convicted by righteousness. How are we convicted of judgment? How a holy God has always judged sin and we’re going to talk more about judgment when we get to the final movement of the symphony.

Hebrews 10:31 says: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Now put those three things together:

1. Sin,

2. Righteousness, and
3. Judgment.

Sin is what we've done,

Righteousness is what we should have done, and

Judgment is the consequences.

1. For instance, we're flying down the freeway 15 miles an hour over the speed limit and the flashing lights in the background lets us know that we've being apprehended. When he pulls us over he says we've sinned, we're speeding. Righteousness—there's the sign. Judgment—here's the ticket.

And it is the Spirit's responsibility—and if He's blowing in our heart today, and we're saying "Friend, all have sinned"—that doesn't make us an exception.

2. We know it—that we're not what we ought to be.
3. The consequences for what we are.

But the cool thing is simply this, Jesus Christ bore our judgment and becomes our substitute. And the Spirit of God gives life at the moment we come to that awareness, and by faith we reach out and accept the gift of His Son.

So our sin, His righteousness and the certainty of judgment

are the things which the Spirit of God uses.

Our sin—the problem.

His righteousness—the solution.

Escape from judgment is the result because:

On Him all mighty judgment fell,
it would have sunk a world to hell.
He bore it for a chosen race
and thus becomes my hiding place.
(source unknown)

If the Spirit of God is blowing in our heart, just like it is in Nicodemus' heart, don't try to quench the Spirit of God. We need to be a big enough person to respond and admit we have a need that we can't take care of but God can. That is the Spirit's function in our life as an instrument of the New Birth.

Our Father, as we go about our responsibilities in the business of the day, thank You so much that these individuals have taken some time to study Your Word. We pray that the function of the Spirit of God as a wind, might blow in our lives if we're Christians and begin to carry on the function that we've looked at today. And if we're not Christians, that the Spirit of God will continue to convict on these three levels and bring us to that point where we're ready to respond to Your

loving provision in Your Son Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

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