

Introduction:

- Leading up to Resurrection Sunday, I am sharing a series of messages with you that I feel will increase the value of what Jesus has done for us. Ie. Have you ever been given something that you do not know the value of? Caleb learned to cook early and he actually enjoyed doing it. One day Kelly and I came home to a meal he had beautifully prepared and plated. It was a Asian dish, with awesome presentation. As we sat down at the table, I couldn't help but notice the beautiful orchid flowers that adorned our plate. The only person I knew who grew orchids was our neighbor. She had just explained the beauty, rarity, and love she had for her orchids. Later we found out that he had asked our neighbor if he could have two orchid flowers to put on the plates that he had prepared for Kelly and I. She said, "He was so cute in asking! It was such a noble thing he was doing? I just gave them to him!" Many of us approach Resurrection Sunday that way. The cross is pretty but we do not understand the value of what we have in Christ.
- In John 3:3, 7, Jesus says to Nicodemus, "*You must be born again.*" "*You cannot see the Kingdom of God if you are not born again.*" "*You can't get into heaven with out being born again.*"
- The phrase sounds odd in and of itself. It was odd to Nicodemus for he asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter into his mothers womb a second time?" The phrase still sounds odd today when you use it with people who do not know God. Most people, without God, will roll their eyes and think that that person is a Jesus freak, or radical Christian and walk on. The reality is the message is radical! So radical that Jesus himself used such a radical illustration to describe what must happen to a man if ever want to see heaven when he dies.

I. What Does It Mean to be Born Again?

- A. "Born again" comes from a Gr word that means "to be born anew." It comes from a word that has two parts. The first means "to be born" and the second, a preposition meaning "again" is attached to it. In theology is called Regeneration... means: re-generation/to be born anew, born again.
 1. "*So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'*" (John 3:3, 7 NLT)
 2. "*For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.*" (1 Peter 1:23, NLT)
 3. "*he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.*" (Titus 3:5, NLT) Ie. If he washed away my sins why do I keep on sinning? Follow me through the series.
- B. From these scriptures it is apparent that we are speaking of a spiritual rebirth. But this spiritual birth is for eternity. It is the birth that counts in eternity!
 1. Through faith in Christ by the power of Holy Spirit there is such a thing as a spiritual rebirth.
 - a) Ezk. 11:19; 36:26 "*I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them.*" See Jer 24:7
 - b) David in Ps 51:10 said, "*Create in me a clean heart...and put a right spirit within me.*"
 2. When the spirit of a man is made new the man is made new. He becomes a new being because it is not just your spirit that is being saved. It is the total man.
 - a) "*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NLT)
 - b) This person is a new creature! A new creation! This is the amazing wonder of regeneration/or being born again!
- C. Regeneration/being born again is required if you desire an eternity with God. Jesus said it, "*You must be born again!*" See Jn 3:3,5.
 1. We were spiritually dead without Christ.
 2. We suppressed the truth and our lives and hearts became darker and harder.
 3. "*Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—...*" (Ephesians 2:1–2, NLT)
 4. The only hope we have in this human race is to be born again/re-generated through Christ Jesus!
- D. Regeneration is a work that occurs through the Holy Spirit when we put our faith in Jesus. Since it is a spiritual rebirth that we are experiencing, it must be of the Holy Spirit, from God Himself!

1. Just like the Spirit hovered over the dark waters in creation, and brought forth light and life, so in regeneration the Holy Spirit brings forth new life in those who believe.
2. This is the greatest miracle we can experience in our life time. Ie. Kathryn Kuhlman, "I believe in miracle, I have seen a soul set free, Miraculous the change in one redeemed through Calvary!"

II. How Does One Get Born Again?

- A. Our sin darkened hearts must be illuminated by the Word of God. That word must be preached until it illuminates the heart. God's word does two things.
 1. It lets me know I am a sinner and that I am separated from God. This illumination must show a man how sinful he really is and that this sinful condition if not remedied will result in spiritual tormenting death for all eternity. For regeneration to occur a person must know that they are forever lost or separated from God. This is what leads to the second thing Gods word does. Acts 2:23 You crucified Jesus! Therefore the people said, "What must we do to be saved?"
 2. It lets me know that Jesus is the only way out.
 - a) Jesus is the Way, The Truth and the Life! No one gets to the Father except through Me. Jn 14:6
 - b) The word that brings conviction also points to the Way out!
- B. We must repent. Under that conviction of the Holy Spirit through God's word we must repent. That is what Peter told the people in Acts 2:31-38. Repentance is the moment of truth in one's life. Am I going to keep going the direction I was and die. Or shall I choose Christ and live. In Acts they were cut to the heart. Acts 2:37.
 1. Repent by turning away from our sins.
 2. Repent by turning to God and His ways. *"It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.'"* (Luke 24:47, NLT)
 3. *"Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away."* (Acts 3:19, NLT)
- C. We must believe or put our faith in God's word.
 1. The Word must be sown. Must receive the Word of God. Parable of the sower in Mk 4. Describes hearts. Hard, weedy, rocky, good. All the soils received the Word but only one bore fruit. Through the preaching of God's word we realize we are sinners and that we are separated from God. We recognize our need for what God has provided. Therefore, we receive the Word of God.
 - a) 1 Peter 1:23, 25 *"But the word of the Lord remains forever." And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.*" (1 Peter 1:25, NLT) The word must be received in the heart to bring forth spiritual life just as seed of man placed in the womb brings forth life in the natural.
 2. The Person must have faith in that word. They must receive it by faith and trust in it for eternal life.
 - a) *"So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ."* (Romans 10:17, NLT)
 - b) *"God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it."* (Ephesians 2:9, NLT)

III. What Happens In Me When I Am Born Again?

- A. You get a new heart.

1. God said it in the OT first: *“And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.”* (Ezekiel 36:26, NLT) God is speaking of a radical alteration of man.
 2. Paul says it in the NT. He washed away our sins and gave us new birth. *“he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.”* (Titus 3:5, NLT)
 3. *“But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”* (Hebrews 8:10, NLT) This is one of the most beautiful and rewarding benefits of the new birth!
 4. 2 Cor 5:17 Says we are new creatures! A new heart comes with that!
- B. You get a new nature.
1. Again, 2 Cor 5:17 *“...a new life has begun.”*
 - a) When a man is born again/re-generated the nature or the character of God becomes his new operating system (new nature)! It is no longer normal sin. Ie. When you do you get an ‘error’ message on your screen. The reason being, we have become partakers of the divine nature of God. 2 Peter 1:4.
 - b) Sin becomes unnatural to the born again person. It is out of character with the nature of God that is now in us. 1 John 3:9 It is not natural for a Christian to sin.
 2. The nature of God is expressed in us in three ways. Holiness, love and truth. This is the nature of God. Therefore it also become the nature of the believer.
 - a) Holiness is the nature of God
 - (1) *“Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.”* (Ephesians 4:24, NLT)
 - (2) The born again person has a new desire to walk holy and upright before God. We are now, as Paul says, *“Slaves to righteousness.”* Ro 6:17,18. This is a strong statement but true. For prior to choosing Christ we were slave to sin.
 - (3) This does not mean that we will not sin. John actually covers that in chapter 1 and gives us an Advocate to represent us when we do sin, Jesus Christ.
 - b) Love is the nature of God
 - (1) Love is a major characteristic of this new man!
 - (2) 2 Cor 5:14 which is right before the New Man scripture, states: *“the love of Christ controls us.”* Those words are expressed by Paul right before he declares we are new creatures in Christ. vs 17.
 - (3) *“We love each other because he loved us first.”* (1 John 4:19, NLT)
 - (4) *“Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”* (1 John 4:7–8, NLT)
 - (5) This love positions us to fulfill the two great commandment: a. Love God and b. love each other. A new heart, renewed mind, new empowerment from a new Master really soars to new heights in love.
 - c) Truth is nature of God
 - (1) A major transformation in the born again person is the Truth that is in Him. *“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* (John 8:32, NLT)
 - (2) We are filled with the Spirit of Truth. *“He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.”* (John 14:17, NLT)
 - (a) *“Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you.”* (2 Timothy 1:14, NLT)
 - (b) We now love the light and flee darkness.

(3) To be a born again child of God is to be a person who radiates Truth. Truth is a part of his new nature!

(4) So we are a new being, with a new nature and a new life!

IV. A New Life: A born again person is a person with a new heart, a new nature and a New Life!

- A. Think on these words, “*...And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.*” (Romans 6:4, NLT) Christ is the gateway to a new life.
- B. To be born again is to pass from death to life! Eph 2:1 states we have been made alive in Christ.
- C. There is aliveness to God! Ro 6:11 “*Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God.*”
 1. There is a new awareness of God’s presence. Before our minds were darkened.
 2. In Christ we are truly human alive to God, filled with purpose.
- D. There is a sense of “real happiness” and it is from the inside out. It is not based on externals but an eternal internal condition in Christ.
 1. Jn 10:10 there is abundant life in Christ Jesus.
 2. There is real fellowship with other believers.
 3. “*I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!*” (John 15:11, NLT)
 4. Phil 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord again I say rejoice. vs 11 I have learned to be content.
- E. Finally, there is eternal life.
 1. Following Jesus words to Nicodemus we saw last week, “You must be born again.” We are given Jn 3:16 “*For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son so the that whoever believes will not perish but have life everlasting.*”
 2. To be born again is to enter by faith into eternal life.

Conclusion:

- “*All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.” (1 Peter 1:3–4, NLT)*