

Fulfillment: New Birth

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Preacher: Brady Owens

[0 : 00] If you would, open your Bibles to John chapter 3. John chapter 3, and we're continuing our series. We're getting right down to the end of it here, where we're just trying to get a glimpse of the Bible as a whole.

Kind of the plot line of the Bible, the storyline of the Bible. And we started back in creation, and from creation we looked at the fall, and from the fall we looked at covenant.

From covenant we went to kingdom, from kingdom to fulfillment. And today we're looking still at the fulfillment of promises, and particularly what we call the new covenant.

It's talked about in Jeremiah, it's talked about in Ezekiel, it's talked about in Hebrews. And we need to see and understand this thing that we call the new covenant. It's something that is, I mean, it's vital.

If you're a Christian, you've just got to know and understand what this is. And part of those promises has to do with a new heart. And that's what we're going to be looking at here this morning, most particularly the necessity of this thing we call the new birth.

[1 : 02] So in John chapter 3, I'm going to read verses 1 through 8, but this morning I'll just focus in on verses 1 through 3 in the preaching. So here we go. Here's the word of the Lord, beginning in verse 1.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old?

He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he? Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it is going.

[2 : 13] So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. Let's pray together. Father, we come to you this morning, and as we read your word, we want to know what it is you meant, what it is that you said, so that we would know how to think and how to apply these truths to our own lives.

And Lord, I pray that you would open our hearts and our minds to hear the truth. Lord, I cannot change a single person's mind, heart, or anything.

And so we are dependent upon you to give spiritual sight to those that need it. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So there was a man riding on his horse, and as he was riding on his horse, he came across a bird there on the side of the road, on the side of the path, and this bird was laying on its back with its legs straight up in the air.

So the man was like, this is strange. He got off the horse and went over to the bird and got real close to the bird and realized the bird was not dead but was alive. So he says, are you okay? To which the bird answered, yes. He says, well then, what are you doing on your back with your feet in the air? And the bird says, well, haven't you heard the rumor? Sure. They say the sky is going to fall.

[3 : 34] The man says, well, do you think you're going to be able to hold up the sky with your tiny legs? And the bird says, well, I'm just doing the best I can. Now, that is a silly story.

It's ridiculous in every aspect of it. I mean, not only the content of the story, but even just telling the story. I stand here feeling super silly telling you such a story.

But the reason that I'm telling you such a silly story is because there are some people in this world who think because of their upstanding traditional morality, they're going to be able to hold off the wrath of God from their lives.

And that is impossible apart from the new birth in the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to, this morning, talk about the necessity of having this new birth.

And I want to give you two reasons why you and I need the new birth. The first comes from verse 1 and 2. And it's this idea that without the new birth, we are just religious.

[4 : 44] This man who comes to see Jesus on this night, Jesus tells him that he must be born again if he's going to see the kingdom of God.

And so if this man is not born again, then he will be stuck in verse 1 and 2 being exactly who he is in verse 1 and 2. And so I want us to take a look at who he is for just a moment because I think that will help us.

One of the main things about this man is that he was a Pharisee. A Pharisee is a group of men who rose up out of the work of Ezra in the Old Testament.

Because the southern kingdom, the northern kingdom of Israel, they came to an end because of idolatry and because of not believing God, God put an end to those kingdoms because of that.

They knew that the 70 years of exile that they spent in Babylon was due to this idolatry. So from Ezra arose a group of scribes and lawyers who basically said, we're never going back into exile again.

[5 : 54] And so what they did is between the Testaments, between Old and New Testament, this group arose, they wrote all of these extra laws so that nobody could get even close to disobeying the other laws.

In other words, you had the law that said, remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. And they said, you know what? That's not good enough. We're going to go further out in order to keep people from even getting into this middle law.

Let me just give you a couple of examples. A woman could not look into a mirror on the Sabbath day because she might see a gray hair and pluck it.

And that would be work. I know, that's pretty ridiculous, right? I'm just saying, that's the Pharisees for you. Another law they had was this, that if a chicken laid an egg on the Sabbath, you could eat the egg, but on the next day you would have to kill the chicken for working on the Sabbath.

You know, see, here's the problem. The problem is, is that when we read the New Testament and we see these Pharisees and we see Jesus sort of contrary to the Pharisees, lined up against them in these battles of the mind and battles of truth, we tend to think that this is the New Testament and Jesus versus the Old Testament and the Pharisees.

[7 : 22] And that is wrong. The Pharisees were not Old Testament representatives. They did not represent what Old Testament religion taught.

Jesus did. Because they thought everything was about the external. They thought that by obeying these little silly laws, they could hold back the wrath of God from them with their little tiny legs.

And what they forgot is that Old Testament religion, God, was after the heart. Deuteronomy 10, verse 16, as Moses gives the law to them a second time, says, so circumcise your heart and stiffen your neck no longer.

Those external things like sacrifices and tabernacles and feast days and all of these things, they had to be done, but they were meant to be done to point to the reality that inside each person is a stony heart that hates God that needs to be changed and they need to have this new heart put into them.

They needed to be born again. This other thing about this ruler is that he's a ruler of the Jews, which meant that he was someone that everybody looked up to.

[8 : 38] He was a pillar of the community, if you want to say it that way. His opinion was sought after. He was one of their trusted leaders. He was a good guy.

But there's a third thing about him and that is that he experienced spiritual things. He experienced spiritual things. You can see in verse 2, he says, we know that you've come from God because no one can do these signs that you do unless he does.

He has seen the signs. He's experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. He's experienced and seen God move.

And yet, he needs the new birth. It's like the woman who said to me once that she knew that God was pleased with her and that she was going to go to heaven when she died because one time she prayed for rain and it rained.

I'm just telling you, Jesus talks about this idea of having spiritual experiences that does not mean that you're really a Christian. That's what he says in Matthew 7 where he says, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter.

[9 : 53] And many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not cast out demons in your name? Did we not perform many miracles in your name?

Can you imagine any three things being more indicative of the ministry of Jesus Christ than prophecy, casting out demons, of performing miracles?

And yet, what does Jesus say to the people like that? Then I will declare to them, verse 23, I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.

You see, without the new birth, we're just religious. And that's it. And the question that I have for you is that are you a Nicodemus?

Are you a pillar of the community type person, an upstanding moral good guy, but you've never been born again? Maybe you think to yourself, you know, I'm not a terrible person.

[10 : 58] I mean, I know I do some bad things every now and then, but I mean, I try to be honest, I try to pay my taxes, I try to treat people, you know, with respect, surely I'm okay, right?

There's a terrifying thing that Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 20. He says that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

He's just said that these Pharisees need to be born again. In all of their law keeping that they're trying to do, which doesn't represent the Old Testament, they, in their culture, were the most spiritual, righteous people, yet Jesus says that's not enough.

It's there in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus goes on to tell us that what we, what we need to do is recognize that the law is not only about external things we do, but it's about internal heart attitudes.

You just think about the commandment, the sixth commandment, right? You know how you remember the sixth commandment? It's the sixth commandment, do not murder, right? So, you get that?

[12 : 10] Okay, sixth commandment, do not murder. And most of us, if we were to say, have you ever murdered? You would say, no, I've never murdered anybody, but Jesus says, if you're guilty, I mean, if you're angry with your brother, then you're guilty of breaking this law.

So, who in here has never once, a day in their life, been angry? Yeah, none of us can raise our hands.

Do you see, do you see what I'm saying here? What I'm saying here is that we have a tendency to think that we're good people and that that goodness is going to win God's favor, but the truth of the matter is that our goodness is never going to be good enough.

To have the kind of righteousness that's required to be in the kingdom of God is a kind of righteousness that would obey all the law of God perfectly from birth till death in both the externals and the internals.

So, not only would I, from birth to death, have to avoid murdering anybody, I would have to avoid the anger that's behind that murder from birth to death.

[13 : 22] And that's just one commandment. You see, it really gets down to the first commandment. And you know, the first commandment is this.

Have no other gods before me. And this is really the test. This is the test you have to put yourself through because I know, I know that there are so many people who are good people.

There are people that you, you walk around all day long and you can look at them and they'll do good things for you and they're kind to you and they're respectful and they have integrity and they're honest.

But the question is, is why? Why are you honest? Why do you have integrity? Why do you try to tell the truth?

Is it because you want people to see that you're a person of integrity? Then that's the only reward you get is people see that you have integrity. You don't get heaven off of that.

[14 : 19] You have no other gods before me means that the reason that you don't lie, the reason that you act with integrity is because you're thrilled with Jesus Christ.

That your heart is fixed upon Jesus Christ. That you love Jesus Christ more than anything. that Jesus Christ is your all in all.

That Jesus Christ is your very breath in and your breath out. It's the very blood that beats through your veins is Jesus Christ. He is your satisfaction. He is your thrill.

He is your Lord. He is your Master. He is your delight. He is your everything. And the reason you try to do anything good whatsoever is not to call attention to you, not to be satisfied in your own mind that you're doing things right, but you do all of these things so that Jesus gets all the glory and all the praise.

And you would have to love Him more than you love your family. More than you love your spouse. More than you love your own life.

[15 : 39] And that is impossible without the new birth. And so Christians, Christians, let me just challenge you for a second.

We've started having a membership process for people to join the church and the reason for that is because anybody can attend worship but only Christians can be members of a church.

And so we need to know if someone has been born again as best we possibly can. So that's why we have this membership process. This is why evangelism is so important.

Right? You and I as Christians, we are to take the gospel to those out there and I just want you to understand something because when you live around a bunch of people who are upstanding and moral and have traditional values, it's difficult to think to yourself that these are people who might end up in hell.

But the statistics say that in the state of Texas, 60% of men are not believers at all and 50% of women are not believers at all in the state of Texas.

[16 : 55] And that's overall. And as you get younger and younger, those percentages get bigger and bigger. What you can say then to yourself is basically this. when you look at Medina, 50% of the people who live here are lost and dying and going to hell.

And they need the gospel. And the longer that we have the attitude and the mindset that says they look moral, they should be okay, they're upstanding citizens, they're pillars of the community, the more we keep our mouths shut and the more we seal their doom.

And then one final thing that I'm going to tell you sitting here this morning as Christians who say that if I die today I'm headed to heaven.

2 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 5 Paul says that you're to test yourself to see if you're in the faith or not. And I would say to you the same thing. I say it to myself all the time.

I remember when I was saved I was 18 years old. I mean there was a there was a day I wasn't saved and a day that I was saved. Right? You know I was 18. It was September the 23rd 1989 and that morning when I woke up had I died on the way to the church I would have busted hell wide open but on the way home from the lake that afternoon at 3 o'clock in the afternoon if I had died in a car accident I'd have gone straight to the Lord because I was saved that day.

[18 : 24] But even with that knowledge I still go back and test myself and say are you really in the faith? Is your hope really in Christ? And the reason that that's so important is because of Miss Susie.

My dad was a pastor of a church for a long time and then he retired and we went to First Baptist Church Mauriceville and one of the first Sundays that we were there I remember the pastor got through preaching he came down to the front invitation was over and he had some announcements to make and he had Miss Susie stand up.

Miss Susie came up she grabbed the microphone and she began to explain her story. She had been in that church all her life. Her dad had been a deacon in that church and for all of her life that she remembered she had been teaching Sunday school and she had been teaching vacation Bible school and she had done all this stuff in the kitchen she had done you've done it she did it.

You know what I'm saying? And that morning at 80 years of age she stood in front of that church and she says I have never been born again until today.

And I just beg you don't let your name being on somebody's membership role of some church make you go but what will people think about me if I tell them I'm not really a Christian?

[19 : 46] I'm going to tell you I'm going to tell you if you were to come to me being a pillar of the community and say to me I've never been a Christian but today the Lord saved me I'm going to tell you what I would say praise God I love you come on and if anybody else had any kind of attitude with you like pff well I knew it then you tell me who they are and I will go do something because we're not going to treat each other that way the only way anyone gets saved is because God opens their eyes so without the new birth we're just religious and I'm calling on you please come come to him let me give you my second reason then without the new birth we're spiritually blind we're spiritually blind this comes from verse 3 this is where Jesus says that unless you're born again you cannot see the kingdom of God let's talk about the kingdom of God just for a quick second we could go into this topic a lot but we just don't have the time for that but a couple of things

I just want to be sure that we know number one the kingdom of God is the same thing as the kingdom of heaven you read in scripture about kingdom of God kingdom of God then you'll read about kingdom of heaven those two are interchangeable they mean the exact same thing okay let me give you one example Matthew chapter 19 verse 23 and 24 Jesus said to his disciples this is about the rich man who's not going to enter into heaven says that it's it's harder for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven verse 24 again I say to you it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God two verses side by side using the two terms they are the same thing second thing when you use the term kingdom the kingdom can stand for the king the kingdom can stand for the domain the kingdom can stand for the citizens the kingdom can stand for the borders and the kingdom can stand for the law or the rule of the king or the kingdom can stand for all of that that it's all of these things right and sometimes you can even use the term king to refer to kingdom the bible does that a lot back and forth and you have to kind of watch what you're looking at here in our present context the idea of the kingdom of God here is the most general way of understanding and that broad thing that means both the king and the domain and the rule and the citizens and he's saying then that you cannot see the kingdom of God now this particular word for see is not the idea of being able to be present with it and see it but it's the idea of understanding it it's where you observe something and you process and you understand it it's like when I tell you a joke and you don't get it until about three you know 30 seconds later and then you say oh I see now you understand right this word means to grasp to see to understand the kingdom of God what it does not mean is the same thing as verse 5 where it says to enter the kingdom of God so Jesus is telling

Nicodemus you're religious and yes you know some things from the Bible yes you're moral and upstanding but you have absolutely no spiritual understanding of the kingdom of God unless you're born again and that is evidence because he says is a man supposed to go back into his mother's womb and be born again like he just doesn't get it because he has no spiritual insight that he's spiritually blind that spiritual blindness keeps him from understanding the spiritual truths of the kingdom the king the gospel and all of these things he is spiritually blind in order to enter the kingdom of God you must repent and believe in order to believe in the king you must have spiritual understanding and insight and in order to have that spiritual sight you must have the new birth this is what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 where he says a natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God for they're foolishness to him he cannot understand them because they're spiritually appraised and what this means is that without this spiritual sight being spiritually blind means you don't even understand the danger that you're in why would you run to a savior that you don't feel like that you need because when you're spiritually blind you don't understand your danger just imagine for a moment you're sleeping in bed and you're part of that morning where you're about to wake up and you're about to have those last couple of dreams right before you wake up you know what I'm talking about they last just real fast and and then they wake you up and you get up and now you're awake for the day so just imagine that okay if you need to close your eyes close your eyes don't fall asleep but just just think about this there you are you go off into a dream and the first thing you hear is my voice saying wake up wake up and and as the dream goes on you begin to realize

I'm yelling at you wake up and you think to yourself what is my pastor doing in my dreams wake up and then you begin to hear this beep beep beep beep and you're going like this is the craziest dream in the world what is he doing here and the more that this begins to go on the more you begin to start to flutter and wake up a little bit and your eyes begin to kind of blink and you're kind of like okay I'm waking up but then you still hear my voice and you're going like why am I still hearing his

voice and you kind of open your eyes and you're not in your bedroom anymore but you're in your bed and you're going like what's going on and what's happened is that in the night a tornado has come destroyed your house picked up your bed and plopped it in the tree in front of my house and I'm down on the ground yelling at you wake up wake up and we got a cherry picker backing up to get you out of your bed but you were spiritually dead and blind and could not see it till someone comes along and calls you by name and says wake up with that spiritual blindness you do not know the danger that you are in and I know that there are some people there's some people who would say you know maybe it's because when they were young they went to church and they did all the stuff that they were supposed to do maybe they really do live pretty good upstanding moral lives maybe that kind of respectful hardworking leader pillar of the community kind of person and I've heard more than more than my fair share of people soothing themselves by saying something like this well you know

I'm just as good as any of those Christians down there at that church and maybe that's true and let's just think about that for a second maybe that's true but I liken it to swimming the Atlantic Ocean you know some of you are stronger swimmers than I am and just so you know I'm not a strong swimmer at all I still get in the kiddie pool with my arm floaties but let's just say you're going to swim the Atlantic you start off in Galveston you're going to swim all the way to Morocco now on your own by yourself you can't do it you know

[28 : 14] I mean yeah if you had a boat following you pick you up every now and then give you I mean like okay sure but we're talking on your own you're by yourself and I guess when I think about someone saying well I'm just as good as anyone down at that church I'm like well that's great that you swam further out in the Atlantic Ocean than everybody else but guess what you still had to be rescued you never made it on your own anyway you see you're never supposed to compare yourself to other people to soothe your conscience about your lostness as God looks at my life he doesn't care how I stack up against you he cares how I stack up against Jesus and I don't and I need to be rescued and if you're not a Christian today then here's what I just need to simply say to you you were lost and you are in danger of suffering under the wrath of God for all eternity and it's not that

God is not a loving God it's that he is a holy God who you have violated his law and he will by no means clear the guilty but in his great love he sent his son to take that guilt and to take that punishment and to pay that price for sinners and when he took that punishment upon himself and paid it for full he cried out upon the cross it is finished and he would say to you today that though you are guilty though you are his enemy though you hate him and have not loved him as you were created to do today if you will admit that you're a sinner and stop trying like the little bird to do the best you can to keep God's wrath off of you and throw yourself upon the Lord Jesus Christ trust in his life and death and resurrection then you can be saved today so what about the new birth if you believe in the

Lord Jesus Christ the new birth is already there because you see and Christians let me just share with you two more application points for us and then I'm going to be done if all of this about the new birth is true that without it a person does not have spiritual sight they are spiritually blind without it then this ought to cause us to want to pray for our lost family and friends and I don't mean some sort of anemic weak namby pamby kind of prayer that looks at God as somebody who's a perfect gentleman and go like you know God if you could kind of be persuasive you know if you could help them find their way to you if you could sort of do this no when I pray for someone who's lost I'm going to pray for them like I'm trying to pray for them to be healed Lord heal them of cancer I say and I'm not the one in charge I'm not commanding God but at the same time I'm not going to be afraid I'm not so many people are so afraid of like well you know God's not going to violate somebody's free will it's like hey when my lost family or friends are lost I want him to violate their free will and save them I want them to come to him I want them to come to him and so when I pray! pray! Lord save them save them to the outermost take a hold of them bring them to you give them that sight whatever it takes because I want them to know him I don't want to pray in such a way that's half hearted that says well you know God if you want to and why is that because I leave all of that business to him I'm just telling!

[32 : 29] him! what I want and he's the sovereign king I will do what he says but listen we should pray for our lost family and friends we should pray for them and we should want them to know Jesus do not be afraid don't sit there and think to yourself am I presuming upon God he is your

heavenly father he loves you he wants to hear from you run to him and say daddy please please please save don't be afraid to pray and one final thing I promise this is it as a Christian it's really easy as we're thinking about the new birth to go like well I've been born again so why are we talking about this I'm glad you preached to the lost people today but what does this have to do with me I'm really glad you asked that question because

I want to read to you one final passage I'm just going to make a couple of comments and then we're going to close it's in 1 Peter chapter 1 beginning of verse 3 just listen to this listen Christian Christian listen to this blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his great mercy!

has caused us to be born again full stop he's caused us to be born again there's the same truth the same word God has caused your new birth he's telling this to Christians keep going you're born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to obtain an inheritance!

which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away reserved in heaven for you he's caused this new birth in you and this new birth has given you a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus this new birth has given you an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and will not fade away and that inheritance is being reserved and protected for you who've been born again and then he says verse five who are protected by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time not only is that new birth then protecting for you in heaven and inheritance! But that new birth is a part of the protection on you so that you make it to that inheritance! You see what I'm saying? By his mercy by his mercy he's caused you to be born again so that you would have such a thing and then it goes on in verse six he says in this you this is where the rubber meets the road trials distress difficulties suffering heartache the reality of our lives and there's joy to be had in the joy that

[36 : 35] God caused our new birth that provides for us a new and living hope protects for us a glorious imperishable unfading inheritance!

That protects us for that inheritance for which Christ died! That new birth is the source of our joy in trouble and in sorrow and if you are truly a child of God you understand exactly what I'm talking about so my prayer to the Lord today is that not only would he convince you of these truths convict you of these truths but if you're not a Christian my prayer is that today you would turn your life and your heart to him you would admit that you're a sinner you would turn from being the boss of your own life and you would trust in Christ but if you're a Christian my prayer is that in the middle of suffering you would look back to how it is that

Christ saved you and think about what all he has in store for you waiting for you and in that rejoice let's pray