The Problem of Unsaved Christians

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[0:00] Well, one of the ongoing benefits that I derive from my friendship with Shambi is that in our conversations, he regularly introduces me to theologians and preachers who lived many years ago.

! And from whom I can learn so much. And that wasn't to be funny, Lyndon. But Lyndon is from Andros. And Andros, they get miscues. What is funny, they don't laugh about. What's not funny, they laugh about. And so we forgive him this morning.
But some time ago, Shambi introduced me to a preacher by the name of Thomas Scott. Thomas Scott was a minister in the Anglican Church in England. He served there in the late 1700s to the early 1800s.
And in the process of introducing me to Thomas Scott, Shambi placed in my hands a well-read and generously marked copy of Scott's autobiography titled The Force of Truth.
And immediately, as I do with books, I turn to the back cover just to read the summary of the book. And when I did, I was quite surprised by the very first sentence that I read.
[1:23] Here's a sentence that caught me by surprise. Thomas Scott, 1747 through 1821, had already been a minister in the Church of England for several years before he discovered that he had never been a true Christian.

I was surprised by this statement because it reminded me in a graphic way that it is possible to be deeply involved in a church, even as a pastor of a church, as a priest of a church, and yet not possess the new life of the new birth.
And sadly, this is an increasing trend. It is an increasing trend where people who claim to be Christian are unconverted and yet are considered to be part of the church.
And the result is that the more this happens, the more we hear statements like these that were published by the Bonner Research Group, a leading Christian research firm in the USA, headed up by a man by the name of George Bonner.
Here are some of those statements that the Bonner Research Group published. One of those statements that the Bonner Research Group published.
[3:26] The Bonner Research Group is speaking about the situation in the USA, but I believe that because of our proximity to the US, if a similar survey were to be held here, I believe the results would be similar.

And perhaps because of the nature of our society where, for example, being taught religion in school is mandated by law in the government schools.
I believe that perhaps we may even have reason for greater concern. So I think the question is, how is it possible to have these results from among those who profess to be Christians?
How is it possible that born-again Christians are just as likely to divorce as non-Christians? How is it possible that white evangelicals are more likely than Roman Catholics and mainline Protestants to object to having black neighbors?
How is it possible that white neighbors? How is it possible for 26%, more than a quarter of traditional evangelicals, people who attend churches where the gospel is preached, to say that they don't think having sex before marriage is wrong?
[5:06] Well, here's how it's possible. Listen to John Piper's very insightful and incisive explanation of the Bonner Group's survey results.

He commented on them, and here's what he wrote. I want to say loud and clear that when the Bonner Group uses the term born-again to describe American churchgoers whose lives are indistinguishable from the world and who sin as much as the world and sacrifice for others as little as the world and embrace injustice as readily as the world and covet things as greedily as the world and enjoy God-ignoring entertainment as enthusiastically as the world, when the term born-again is

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used to describe these professing Christians, the Bonner Group is making a profound mistake. It is using the biblical term born-again in a way that would make it unrecognizable by Jesus and the biblical writers.
That's how it's possible for the Bonner Group to make those statements. Mr. Bonner and his research group call people born-again who are not born-again, but they are in the church.
And therefore, it makes sense that these people would believe and would live in ways that are consistent with and no different from unbelievers, even though these individuals are part of churches.
[6:56] The reason it's possible for the Bonner Group to make these statements is that it is possible that there would be people in churches, including pastors like Thomas Scott, who are seen as Christians and called Christians, but what they believe and how they live is really no different from unbelievers.

And it produces the problem that the title of this sermon points to, the problem of unsaved Christians. The problem of unsaved Christians is that they are unbelievers, even though they carry the Christian label.
But it's not my intention this morning to dwell on the problem of unsaved Christians, but instead I want to focus on the solution to the problem, which John records for us from the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John, chapter 3.
So if you would, please turn in your Bible to John, chapter 3, and we will be reading verses 1 through 15. I'm going to be reading from the English Standard Version, so if you have another translation, yours will read slightly differently.
John, chapter 3, we'll be reading verses 1 through 15. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.
[8:40] 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.

Jesus answered 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? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?
Jesus answered, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter 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 marvel that I say to you, you must be born again.
[9:50] 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.

Nicodemus said to him, how can these things be? Jesus answered him, are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?
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.
I have told you earthly things and you do not believe. How can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the son of man.
And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.
[11:05] Let's pray together. Father, we are grateful this morning that we are able to have your word and to have your word proclaimed to us.

Lord, as we consider this encounter of Jesus and Nicodemus and the conversation they had, would you help us to hear this essential truth, this essential truth of the necessity of the new birth in order to receive eternal life.
Lord, I pray that you'd help us to overcome whatever familiarity we have with this text. Would you grant to us fresh airs to hear what you would say to us.
And Lord, I pray that if there would be any present who would be like Thomas Scott, who would be going along and thinking of himself or herself as a Christian, but who have not experienced the new birth, Father, I pray that you would do for them what you did for Thomas Scott to bring them to the realization that they are unconverted and that they need to know the Savior and knowing the Savior only comes through the new birth.

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And I pray, Lord, that you would be pleased this morning to grant new birth and new life to all those who are outside of Jesus Christ. Would you help us in this moment as we hear and handle this important truth?
[13:03] we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. From this passage before us, we're able to see the solution to the problem of unsaved Christians is the new birth.

Only the new birth can produce the truly transformed life that gives evidence that we belong to God. But the new birth does not only give a transformed life.
It doesn't only give a life that looks different from the way it was. The new birth gives us eternal life. And what I want us to see from this passage this morning is this important truth. Eternal life is found, sorry, eternal life is not found in practicing religion but through believing in Christ.
Eternal life is not found in practicing religion but through believing in Christ. And I hope we see this this morning because the practice of religion is the number one activity that people resort to as a substitute for the new birth that that alone brings about eternal life.
[14:43] But for many they would resort to practicing religion or as some people are prone to say today I'm spiritual not a Christian but I'm I'm a spiritual person and they pursue their own path of spirituality whatever that looks like for them.

but eternal life is not found in practicing religion but it is found in believing in Jesus Christ.
In our remaining time I want to consider this truth and I'll do so under two very simple headings and the first one is practicing religion.
That's what we see Nicodemus doing. He had given all of his life to it and in some ways Nicodemus he's a case study of someone who is practicing religion in search of eternal life.
In many ways Nicodemus is a contradiction. He's a very religious man. He's a Pharisee.
[15:56] He is actually of the most zealous and committed and conservative group of the religious leaders of his day.

He was a member of the Sanhedrin Council. And though all these things are true about Nicodemus, Nicodemus was lost. He comes to Jesus by night reflecting his lost condition being in spiritual darkness as well as the fact that Nicodemus though lost was too proud to relate to Jesus in an open manner being the person that he was.
And so he came to Jesus by night. And he begins his conversation with Jesus by saying to Jesus 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.
Nicodemus and his fellow Sanhedrin council members believed that Jesus had come from God because of the signs that he did. But really Nicodemus was doing Jesus no favor by acknowledging that because essentially he was putting Jesus on the level of Moses and on the level of Elijah who also did signs but who could not save.
Nicodemus fell short of saying Jesus as the Messiah as the Savior who had come into the world. He was looking to Jesus for Jesus to tell him something beyond himself for the life that he recognized that he needed in his own life but he didn't see Jesus as the one as the source of what he truly needed.
[17:55] And notice in verse 3 how Jesus responds to Nicodemus. Jesus responds to Nicodemus in a very faithful way. He gets to the heart of the issue with Nicodemus.

He is able to see what's going on with Nicodemus. He says to him truly truly and those words are solemn words where Jesus is grabbing the attention of Nicodemus to recognize the importance of what he is going to say.
And I say those are cues for us this morning. Those are cues for us this morning to hear that Jesus is about to say the most important and most solemn words that we can ever hear concerning the deepest needs of our life.
The deepest need of our life and that is to be made right with God. And so Jesus says to Nicodemus Nicodemus truly truly I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.
And in the sense Jesus was really saying to Nicodemus he said Nicodemus acknowledging that I am from God acknowledging that God is with me because of the signs is not enough.
Acknowledging that my miracles are genuine is not enough.
[19:19] Nicodemus the reason you sought me out by night the reason you the great ruler of the Sanhedrin council have sought me out is that you recognize there's something missing in your life.

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Nicodemus you would not come to me! Nicodemus the issue is the issue is the new birth. I to you the way is the way to! You recognize that there was a deficit there was something that was missing in your life and you recognize that it will not be attained from your religious position and from your religious practices.
Nicodemus the issue is the new birth being born again and I say to you! with all certainty the only way that a person can see the kingdom of God is he must be born again.
And notice that Jesus is not just speaking to Nicodemus Jesus is speaking to all of us because he doesn't just say to Nicodemus in a direct and a personal way you must be born again he says to Nicodemus if anyone he says unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God that is a statement that transcends beyond Nicodemus now for us to appreciate what Jesus is saying to Nicodemus when he refers to the kingdom of God Nicodemus would have understood because Nicodemus would have been waiting for the kingdom of God as a faithful Jew as a member the Sanhedrin council he would have been looking for the kingdom of God the kingdom of God as a term occurs only two times in
John's gospel and we find both occurrences right here in this conversation with Nicodemus we find the terms in verses 3 and 5 but in John's gospel his preferred term is eternal life but what we see is that John uses kingdom of God and eternal life in an interchangeable manner so for example if you look at verse 15 where it says as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the son of man be lifted up so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life he could have said may enter the kingdom of God or may see the kingdom of God he could have used it in that interchangeable way and also in verse 3 where Jesus says truly truly I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of
[22:18] God Jesus could have said he cannot inherit eternal life so again these terms are being used interchangeably but it doesn't mean that every single time you see the kingdom of God in scripture that it means eternal life that is certainly the case here in this account with Nicodemus so Jesus no doubt surprises Nicodemus when he ignores the compliment and he gets to the heart of the need that Nicodemus has his need for eternal life his need that only is fulfilled through knowing Jesus and being born again and not by practicing religion so why is it that the practice of religion cannot give us eternal life why is it that good practice is like going to church and caring for the needy and caring for the disadvantaged why is it that good practices like those cannot give us eternal life because as Jesus told

Nicodemus there's only one way to receive eternal life and that is you must be born again there's only one way to see the kingdom of God you must be born again and more and more what we're finding is that there are people who are insisting that there's not only one way there are multiple ways Jesus is the way of the Christian and there are other ways that you can make it to heaven they would say the many paths leading to one destination but Jesus says otherwise Jesus says you must be born again and Jesus establishes his uniqueness in being able to say these things because a little later in this discourse he's saying to Nicodemus he's saying Nicodemus I'm not talking off the top of my head he says
Nicodemus I am one who is in a unique position I am the only one who has been to heaven I've been to heaven I've come to the earth he says no one else has ascended into heaven no one else can tell you about these things Nicodemus I am the one who is able to tell you in an authoritative manner this is the way to eternal life so here's what Nicodemus is saying Nicodemus is saying I know you've come from God we know that because the things you do no one can do unless God is with him and Jesus is really saying Nicodemus go further what I am telling you what I am talking to you about I am talking to you about a matter that I can address in an authoritative manner no one else can do that and the only one who has come from heaven to earth and I proclaim to you that unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of
God now this term born again we tend to refer to this term as meaning to get saved we use that to say we refer to it as the whole of the salvation experience but it isn't it is only a part of the salvation experience and I think we are able to see this in the meaning of the term in the original language this term can have two meanings because in the original language the word translated it can mean again or it can also mean from above born again or born from above and when we think of it in terms of the meaning born again the emphasis is to have an experience of entry into the kingdom of God in the same way that we had an experience of being born into this world it is a birth into this world that brought us into this world it is a birth into the kingdom of God that brings a person of God

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and we all know that we did not born ourselves into the world and it's the same way that we can conclude that we will not born ourselves into the kingdom of God there's no act on our part that brought us into this world there's no act on our part that will bring us into the kingdom of God and then the other sense of the word is it means and this points to the origin of the experience of the new birth it is supernatural it is from heaven it is out of this world it is an experience that God himself brings about and so
[27:45] Jesus told Nicodemus Nicodemus you lack what is necessary for eternal life you lack being born again being born from above notice how Nicodemus responds in verse four Nicodemus takes what Jesus says to literally mean that Jesus is saying that a person has to enter his mother's womb physically and be born again and so he says how can a man be born when he is old can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born it's very instructive when we consider how Nicodemus responds to Jesus that Nicodemus begins with himself Nicodemus is in a sense really looking to understand what he can do to bring about this eternal life this entrance into the kingdom of God that Jesus says only comes by being born again

Nicodemus begins to entertain the idea of entering his mother's womb again he says I can't do that because I am too old Nicodemus does what many of us do we think about what we must do to obtain eternal life instead of hearing what Jesus is saying when Jesus uses this language of being born again if we truly accept that for what it is it helps us to see that it is an act that we cannot bring about in our own power and in our own strength we can give ourselves spiritual birth no better than we can give ourselves natural birth and we know it's impossible to give ourselves natural birth we can only give ourselves spiritual birth as well turn over with me to
John chapter one and I want to read verses nine through thirteen John chapter one verses nine through thirteen John writes the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world he was not sorry he was in the world and the world was made through him yet the world did not know him he came to his own and his own people did not receive him but to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of
God what John does is in this section of his gospel John captures these two births in one thought and he is reminding us of the life that comes through the new birth from God that it is not by any human endeavor or ability but it is through God's ability it is through God's will and not man's will that this new birth that he elaborates further on in this conversation with Jesus comes about but notice how Jesus patiently responds to Nicodemus in verse five again another truly truly statement he says to Nicodemus Nicodemus I'm not talking about natural birth I'm talking about spiritual birth about being born of water and of the spirit if anyone does not experience this birth he cannot enter the kingdom of
God he cannot receive eternal life over the years and this continues to be so it is disputed what Jesus actually means by born of water and of the spirit but I believe that the clues are sufficient in this account for us to arrive at what Jesus must be meaning and the first would be in verse 10 where Jesus says to Nicodemus that he expected him as a teacher of Israel he was surprised that he didn't know these things because Jesus expected that he would be able to draw upon his knowledge of the Old Testament to understand what being born of water and of the spirit meant and it is very likely that Jesus was alluding to this passage in Ezekiel 36 25 through 27 where
[33:09] God is through Ezekiel promising to the people of Israel he is going to bring them back out of exile and bring them back to the land of promise and this is what it says in Ezekiel 36 25 to 27 I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols I will cleanse you and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit within you notice and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules this is something God promised that he would do for the nation!

because they couldn't do it for themselves he says I'm going to do these things I'm going to wash you I'm going to put my spirit in you I'm going to give you a new heart I'm going to cause you to walk in my statutes I'm going to cause you to be careful to obey my rules notice in verse 27 of Ezekiel 36 that the word spirit has a capital S in it just as in verses 5 6 and 8 of John chapter 3 so Jesus is referring to the Holy Spirit he's referring to the work of the spirit and when he talks about being born of water and of the spirit he's simply referencing the cleansing work of of the Holy Spirit and not so much trying to say something about the water is important and you must some people say it's

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baptism but notice why we can see from this passage that he's not emphasizing that the water or water in some way is special look in verse 6 in verse 6 he says that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit notice he doesn't say that which is born of water and the spirit again he simply says now that which is born of the spirit is spirit if whatever
Jesus means by born of water is significant and binding he would have repeated it again in verse 6 but he doesn't he only says born of the spirit and that's where the emphasis lies the emphasis doesn't lie in trying to figure out exactly what did Jesus mean by water and then you get into a debate on water baptism that's not it at all and that's what the church of Christ will do and they will say to you that unless you are baptized you're not saved and if they simply followed the rest of it Jesus says they will see that he's not emphasizing the water notice again in verse 8 he says the wind blows where it wishes and you hear it sound but you do not know where it's come from or where it goes so it is with everyone who is born of the spirit he doesn't say who is born of water and the spirit everyone who is born of the spirit so the water is really just speaking about the cleansing work of the spirit in the new birth the change that literally actually takes place in our lives and what a wonderful promise what a wonderful promise for us to see that in the new birth that the spirit does do a work in us he does a cleansing a washing a purifying work in us in particular in our conscience that we can be aware that we have sinned we can be aware!
we Jesus says in verse 6 to Nicodemus flesh is flesh even if you were young even if you were a little young baby and you can go back into your mother's womb flesh is flesh!
he said he said he said he could name us that not just in terms of physical flesh but that entire nature everything about us is flesh everything about us is fallen everything about us is tainted and anything that we produce is tainted and so our best religious efforts our best and most sincere prayer is not perfect before God because it is of the flesh and sadly so many people who have not heeded these words of Jesus are still trying to produce the life that only the spirit can produce by things that they do good things going to church I'll stop getting drunk I'll stop smoking I'll stop going out to night clubs and debasing myself in different ways
[39:09] I'll start going to church all these things Jesus would say they have the flesh flesh can only produce flesh but Jesus says this new birth comes about not from our own effort this new birth this second birth is a spiritual birth it is a spiritual work something that none of us can produce it comes through the Holy Spirit and what it does is it gives us life it awakens us it gives us new life so if you think about it this way in the same way that when a child is physically born comes into the world that child has new life but we all know that the life of that child didn't begin when the child was actually the child exited the womb the life began when conception took place and the same is true for us in the spirit the

Holy Spirit by his own initiative without our help brings new life to that new soul to that soul who comes to Christ he brings new life now we we may see the evidences of that later on we may not see it in any kind of immediate way and really the point that Jesus is making is it's really mysterious and the truth is being born again having this spiritual birth is even more mysterious than natural birth and there's some mystery to natural birth as well one of the mysteries is for example no person no woman knows the exact moment of conception of ideas but no woman knows the exact moment of conception and so it is with the spirit we don't know the exact moment when the spirit has connected with our spirit and brought life and given us new birth and
Jesus tries to explain this to Nicodemus in this illustration about the wind notice what he says to Nicodemus in verse seven he says Nicodemus do not marvel that I say to you you must be born again the wind blows where it wishes and you hear it 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 minimum bottom line Jesus is saying to Nicodemus and he's saying to us that in the same way that we don't understand the blowing of the wind we don't understand the working of the spirit and bringing about new life no one can control the wind the wind blows where it wishes we hear the sound of it we don't know where it comes from we don't know where it is going we can see the effects of the wind when the grass sways or where the tree bends but we don't understand the operation of the wind
Jesus is saying to Nicodemus and he's saying to us spiritual birth is just like that the process is not entirely visible the process is not fully understood but the effects of it are unmistakable the effects are undeniable the one who is truly born of the spirit is truly affected by the spirit and so when we think about the new birth when we think about being born again it is not what we would traditionally call the salvation experience where a person comes and they pray a prayer and they say he got

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born again no at best what we can say is that person who would have prayed some sincere prayer to God did so because they were born again because God gave them spiritual life and brought them from spiritual death that enabled them to pray such a prayer sincerely to
God because prior to being brought from spiritual death to spiritual life we're dead to those things we are dead to God we have no desire for God we have no love for God we have no ability to approach God any more than a dead person can get up and do something on his or her own the same way a person is physically dead and helpless is the same way every single human being is spiritually dead and spiritually helpless to do anything for him or herself in terms of approaching! [44:48] any desire for God and interest for God is the spirit of God has to come and bring new life with the Bible calls being born again and so I'm afraid as we think about this even for some people what they are observing and drawing more from what they have seen around them about what it means to be a Christian what it means to come to Christ than what the Bible actually says and for some people who would date their salvation experience at the moment that they prayed a prayer it would be very much like the woman who doesn't know when she really got pregnant the ability to pray that prayer the ability to cry out to

God for forgiveness is that he has already brought the spiritual life to awaken from spiritual death to spiritual life and this reminds us this morning of our need for divine intervention it reminds us that if the spirit doesn't blow there is no life and the spirit blows differently deals with people differently we have examples we have the example of the apostle Paul when he was Saul on the road to Damascus and the Lord though Saul was determined to go and persecute Christians the Lord graciously intervened knocked him off of his horse and revealed himself to Saul Saul did not come to know the risen Christ because he was seeking the risen Christ he came to know the risen Christ because God sought him on the road to Damascus and revealed himself to
Saul and enabled Saul to say who are you Lord and then we see the example of Lydia a godly woman was praying and doing all sort of other things but a woman who was unconverted when Saul met her when Paul met her she and other women were praying by the river but she wasn't converted she had not experienced a new birth and let me read in Acts 16 verse 14 when Paul was preaching this is what Luke writes in Acts 16 14 he says the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul and so the spread blows in different ways and moves in different ways and here's what I would say to anyone this morning just wondering about these things and trying to make sense of it in your own life
I say this to you if there's any desire for God if there's any interest in the things of God if there's any awareness of your sin and a dislike for sin a growing love for God and the things of God and a desire to turn from sin that is the work of the spirit in your life that's not because you are morally good that is not because you are smarter That is not because you want a better life that is because the spirit who gives life has come to your life and has awakened you to the things of God and I would say to you yield to the work of the spirit in your life up to this point in verse eight we see that Jesus has really only been talking about the necessity for the new birth to bring about eternal life but he hasn't explained in any detail how this eternal life comes about and so in verse nine Nicodemus asks him how can these things be and Jesus goes on to tell him how these things can be and essentially tells him it comes through believing in Christ and this is my second and final point many commentators agree that the question that Nicodemus asks in verse nine can better be translated how can this happen how can it happen and in verses 14 and 15 Jesus answers the question and essentially he says to
[50:05] Nicodemus Nicodemus the answer is found in your Bible and you should know it it's the passage about the bronze serpent the passage in which God instructs Moses to erect this serpent the serpent that was lifted up in the wilderness in the same way that serpent was lifted up in the wilderness the son of man must!

be lifted up so that! whoever believes on him may have eternal life he's essentially answering Nicodemus question and this account that Jesus refers to is found in Numbers 21 the children of Israel had rebelled against God and God sent fiery serpents among them these poisonous snakes and many of them were bitten and many of them died and so the people cried out to Moses Moses in turn prayed to God and asked that the serpents be taken away and the Lord did not answer Moses request he left the snakes but he did tell Moses he said what I want you to do is I want you to make a bronze serpent this huge serpent place it on a pole and whenever a person is bitten by this serpent by any of the poisonous snakes they should look at this bronze snake and those who

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do will live and this bronze snake that
Moses erected was actually out of copper which would have had a reddish color no doubt pointing to the color of the blood and pointing to the atonement that Jesus Christ himself would eventually bring and so whenever the Israelites were bitten by these poisonous snakes they would look upon the serpent and they were healed they didn't die now when we think about this account in the history of the nation of Israel the question arises why were the Israelites saved from death when they were bitten by these snakes and they looked to the bronze serpent on a pole why were they saved from death and the answer is they were saved from death not really because of anything that they did but they were saved by the grace of God they were saved by
God's gracious provision even though they deserve death even though their rebellion merited death but God saved them by grace and the bronze serpent was the instrument that he used but the bronze serpent was not a perfect instrument it pointed to the perfect instrument who was not a dead statue but who was a person the bronze serpent could not change their lives though they were healed they didn't receive eternal life they all eventually died and if sin could truly be forgiven by that bronze serpent that was placed in the wilderness then God would have been most cruel to send his son to die on the cross for sin but brothers and sisters the bronze serpent could not atone for sin it could only point to the one who would atone for sin and that one is
Jesus Christ and so in verses 14 and 15 Jesus is telling Nicodemus that he the son of man is God's agent who must be lifted up in a similar way so that every dying sinner under the poison of sin who looks to him the crucified one will be saved and Jesus indeed fulfilled these words a short time later when he went to Calvary's hill when he was suspended and crucified on a cross and now he brings salvation to believing sinners and he reconciles them to God brothers and sisters this is the solution for unsaved Christians it is the new birth that brings eternal life that comes through
[54:54] Jesus Christ and so this morning I want to remind you that Nicodemus helps us to see the hopelessness and the uselessness of practicing religion to be saved this account of Nicodemus helps us to see that salvation is only possible through a work that is outside ourselves through a work that God does by his Holy Spirit through his Holy Spirit where he gives us life where he enables us to turn from sin where he enables us to believe in the crucified Savior who died in the place of every sinner who would ever put their trust in him we're going to close in a short while in a song but before we do that

I want to ask you right where you're seated to just if you would just bow just consider what you've heard this morning from this account in John's gospel this account of Nicodemus coming to Jesus and just consider where you are if you are a believer this morning thank God that by his spirit he has given you new birth that when you weren't looking for God when you had no interest in God God sought you out and God brought you new life through Christ if you're here this morning you have not trusted in Jesus Christ you would acknowledge that you have not experienced a new birth recognize your dependency on the Lord Jesus Christ and
I would urge you to cry out to him to have mercy on you and to do for you what only he can do and that is to give you this new birth that gives us new life up

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