

A Night to Remember

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[0 : 00] Now we'll turn in our Bibles to the New Testament, to the Gospel of John chapter 3.

The Gospel of John chapter 3, and we'll read the first 21 verses.

John chapter 3. There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he's old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

[1 : 42] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, You must be born again.

The wind blows where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and you receive not our testimony, our witness.

If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.

[3 : 02] And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

[4 : 10] For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

And may God bless to us that very reading of his own truth. Let's sing once more to God's praise from Psalm 118, and this time we sing verses marked 15 to 21.

Psalm 118 at verse 15. In dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health. The Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

We go on to verse 20. This is the gate of God. By it the just shall enter in. Thee will I praise, for thou hast hurt me, and hast my safety been.

Psalm 118 verses 15 to 21. In dwellings of the righteous, This earth and the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

[5 : 49] This earth and the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly. Of joy and health, let our flag and our flag and our flag, Thee will I bear, Thee will I bear, Thee will I bear, Thee will I bear, O, O, I bear, Thee will I bear, O weep, O weep, O weep, O weep, O great God Lord and mighty Lord, demand entrance into sort of the act of offence and contemplating the body of God and the soul?

Let O'er have ye just as ever so, but not to death get more.

O set ye open unto me, and ye of righteousness, Then where I am, thou came to them, and I am our goodness.

This is the gift of the values that shall strive and die.

Let O'er have ye just as ever so, but not to death, Let us turn now to the passage of Scripture which we read in the Gospel of John, chapter 3.

[9 : 08] And while I want to refer to most of the 21 verses which we read, we'll just read again the first three verses.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, For no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus was a very intelligent man. He was a doctor of law.

At the very least the equivalent of what today we'd call a PhD. Why does he come at night to Jesus? Was he afraid?

[10 : 21] Was he embarrassed? Too embarrassed? Was he just too busy and no time during the day?

Why did he come at night? The Bible doesn't tell us why. So what does that mean? It means it's not important for us.

It means we don't need to know. Don't rack your brains. Don't spend your life trying to find out why. Anything is if the Bible doesn't tell us.

It's not vital for salvation. It's not vital to live righteously. It's not vital to get to heaven. The important thing is that Nicodemus came to Jesus.

In the daytime or at nighttime or any time. And it's helpful to know Christ was available. Even during the night.

[11 : 31] Nicodemus came to Jesus. The good thing about Nicodemus is that he was willing to learn. And he was willing to show his ignorance.

And he was willing to ask questions. That's the good thing about him. Nicodemus knew a lot about religion.

He knew a lot about the Bible. The Old Testament, of course. He knew a lot about God.

But he did not know about salvation. Isn't that sad? There's one thing needful.

And Nicodemus, with all that he knew, did not know it. Don't make the same mistake. Nicodemus did not know he needed to be born again.

[12 : 46] Nicodemus did not know. He needed to be saved. Have his sins forgiven. Nicodemus did not know.

You have to have faith in God and in Christ. Now, there's three things here.

It's very important that we don't stop reading what Jesus said to Nicodemus at verse 7 or 9 or 10. You must be born again.

He went on to preach the glorious gospel. So I want to look at all that he said. As far as we can make out, Christ is speaking until verse 21.

So let's look at three things he said there. What it means to be born again. Why we have to be born again.

[13 : 46] Why we have to be saved. And thirdly, why we need to have faith. We must be born again.

It's the first thing. And remember, it's only the first thing he said to Nicodemus. Why must we be born again? There's three things I just want to mention quickly.

First of all, unless you're born again, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Now, will you get that? Nobody is born into the kingdom of heaven.

Nobody just lands into the kingdom of heaven. You must enter it.

Have you got that? You must enter into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus goes further.

[14 : 55] And he says, unless you're born again, you cannot even see the kingdom of heaven. Isn't that amazing?

The number of people you meet that are prepared to pontificate about religion. And they haven't the foggiest idea. And yet they'll pontificate.

Verse 3 tells us. Except. Not verse 3. Sorry. It's verse 4. Is it? Not verse.

Or is it 3? Ah, yes. It is verse 3. Except the man be born again. He cannot see the kingdom of heaven.

In other words, he's not capable of discussing the subject. You don't know what you're talking about unless you're born again.

[15 : 57] Now. But there's something else, he says. It's really quite, quite challenging. In verse 6.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the spirit is spirit. What's he really saying there?

Just imagine. Some way. Somehow. If you're here. This morning. And you're listening to me.

Or you're listening to a recording or something. And you're not a Christian. Just imagine. Some way you land. You happen to land in the kingdom of heaven.

Would you be happy? Come on now. If you're here. You're not a Christian. And you did happen to arrive in heaven.

[16 : 59] Would you be happy? My friend. You'd be miserable. You of course. Don't want to go to hell. You've got that intelligence.

But would you be. Anything but miserable in heaven. Will you be keeping an eye on the clock. To find out.

How much over the hour we may go. Is an hour. A long time. In God's house. On earth. How long.

How are you going to. That. How will you cope. With everlasting. Ages. In heaven. If an hour. Is a bit on the long side.

On earth. If. If you're not a Christian. Friend. You've got. Problems. What happens.

[17 : 59] If you don't go to hell. If you go to a place. Where it's just boring. You must. Be born. Again. To appreciate heaven.

To enjoy heaven. To long. For heaven. You must. Be born again. It doesn't come naturally. It's. Divine.

Power. You need. To change you. Once. When a person. Is born again. He's. A new.

Creation. As the Bible. Says to us. If any man. Be. In. Christ. Jesus. He's actually. A new. Creation. A new. Creation. He's not.

A different. Person. Is the same person. But a new. Creation. Of the same. Person. A new. Understanding.

[18 : 54] Of spiritual. Things. That you don't. Appreciate. In your. Natural. Condition. You see. Things. In a new. Light.

And you have. New. Convictions. You might. Have something. To say. About sin. You might. Have something. To say. About the Bible. You might.

Just have. Something. To say. About the gospel. And Christ. But when you're born again. They've all. Got a new. Relevance. They've all. Got a new. Meaning. There's a new. Dimension. To these things.

And you're. Extremely. Interested. In them. And you've. Got. Convictions. About them. Not just. Ideas. And you've.

Got a. Basis. For. Believing. About it. And the basis. Of course. Is the word. Made. Is. Is. Is. Christ. Made. The word.

[19 : 50] Made flesh. It's the Bible. You're. It's an amazing thing. When one is born again. Their affections. Are reversed.

has the most. They desire.

They do. The love. Think. This hate. Things they once loved. Our affections are reversed. That's what. Being born again. Does to you. you've got convictions about sin you've got convictions about the Bible you've got convictions about Christ you've got convictions about the gospel and you want to hear more about it you've heard enough about it once a week before you're born again before you're changed you see to be born again as you might see in the margin of your Bible these words could be translated except the man be born from above to be born again means to be born from above to have a dimension of the heavenly implanted within you so that you now have a new ability in spiritual things you can pray now you can read your Bible now you go to church now with a new spirit before you were made to pray you could be made to go to church but when you're born again these things have a new relevance a new meaning they've put life in you and you you must be born again now that leads us secondly to not not just that we must be born again but we must be saved

Nicodemus just couldn't quite get his head around quite a few things at this point at this stage why are we born again so that we can be saved you cannot be saved unless you're first born again now you see Nicodemus was a decent man highly respectable totally committed to religion to studying things of the Bible but he wasn't saved his sins weren't forgiven he hadn't he had not got the qualifications for heaven Nicodemus almost certainly thought that the only way to heaven was by being a good enough

Jew it's almost certain that he thought that was the way to heaven by being a good enough Jew he knew the Jews were the people of God he knew the Jews had words from heaven the Bible and he studied them but his sins weren't forgiven he didn't have peace with God he wasn't on his way to glory he did not realise he did not realise that salvation involves a change of nature a change of nature and that salvation is essentially a process the Bible speaks about a person who was saved at a certain time or in a certain place on a certain occasion or whatever was saved the Bible speaks about somebody being saved in the process of being saved and the Bible speaks about someone who will be saved in the final analysis in the great day of judgment when the judgment will be over and Christ saved my sheep who heard my voice and followed me into glory but there was an occasion when you can say it was all started and from that moment onward you're in the process of being saved

[24 : 37] I don't know if I've mentioned here before or not but there is no verse in the Bible which says we're predestinated to be saved now before you charge me with being a hypocrite and a heretic what the Bible does say is you're predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ that's what we're predestined and being in a state of salvation is being in that process of being gradually conformed into the image of Christ it begins with conversion it begins with first believing in Jesus and from that moment onward the rest of your life you're being shaped into the image of Christ that was startling news to Nicodemus it was startling that no one could save themselves and what

Jesus said to Nicodemus must have must have jolted him Jesus had said you see in verse 19 that by nature humans were evil we're not neutral we're not born neutral we're born with a prejudice a bias against God we're not aware of it at first indeed you might never be aware of it but we're born with a prejudice against God we're born in sin we're shapen in iniquity Jesus had said that by nature humans love darkness and need to be brought out of darkness we love it men loved darkness rather than light and it was a shock to

Nicodemus it seems that Jesus said humans by nature are condemned now do you think you're going to heaven do you think you're condemned Jesus is telling us here that in verse 19 effectively or verses 18 and 19 we're condemned that we're all condemned as we come into this world we're condemned why verse 19 this is the condemnation no sorry 18 he that believeth on him is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already do you believe you're condemned probably some of you do but why are you condemned well Jesus tells us in verse 18 why he that believeth not is condemned already because because you because you can't stop drinking because you're into pornography no because you've not believed in the name of the only begotten son of

God everyone in the world is under two classifications saved unsaved not condemned condemned what's the criterion your behaviour not really do you believe on the name of the son of God now if you're not a Christian you'll find that hard to believe it's strange it's hard to believe because you need faith you need faith from God to believe the simple elementary truth it's not difficult it's pretty straightforward but it's hard to do because you're not born again Jesus said here we're perishing and that is we're not just under condemnation we're not just not living the life we're actually in a process of depreciation getting worse and you can't reverse the process we can't reverse the process we need to be saved by an outside we need to be saved by a third party we cannot save ourselves we cannot change ourselves but God can change us

Christ can change us the Holy Spirit can change us he can make us a new people in Christ we need to be saved by a third party and God has spoken from heaven and he has done something which leads us to the third thing Nicodemus needed to be born again he needed to be saved he needed to have faith in Christ and so do you and so do I you see it's all too easy to say if you just read the first ten verses of chapter three you say look I cannot save myself what's the point in worrying about it just live your life to enjoy it well Jesus is saying in these verses the situation is extremely serious he is saying that very very serious for mankind

[31 : 04] God must intervene or we're lost but then Jesus goes on to tell us God has intervened God has sent his son into the world God has ensured that his son Jesus was crucified as a substitute for those who can't be good enough can you be good enough before God I can't your elders can't ask them but in Christ in Jesus we're accepted as good enough in Christ we need to have faith in him God has intervened he has sent his son to the cross and now now if anyone at all anyone at all has faith in him he will definitely be saved here's the anomaly although it's true we're all perishing although it's true none can save themselves yet there is no need for anyone to perish that's the anomaly we're helpless we're done for we can't save ourselves and yet there's no reason why anyone would perish all can be saved if all believe if all repent of their sins and depend on

Christ to take them to heaven that's the gospel that's the truth it is very important to understand the gospel and its simplicity often confuses us saving faith hinges all hinges on Christ you see in a very real way faith does not save Christ saves it's faith in Christ that saves you see the Buddhist the average Buddhist probably has more faith than most of us in this building the Buddhist a lot of faith in Buddhists they burn themselves to death the poor petrol lower themselves and set themselves alight that's faith that's faith in

Buddha that's not saving faith you see it's not faith that saves it's Christ that saves I don't know if I've used the illustration before but I personally have found it hugely beneficial and it's worth saying again if I have said it to you to you if I have to go across a bridge and I'm told now look George there's two bridges there in front of you one of them will not hold your sixteen stone but the other one will put your faith on the bridge that you think will take you across one of them will carry my sixteen stone the other won't I look at them and I study them and I study as well but I think it's I think it's this one on the left and I really put my faith on that bridge put all my faith in it it's going to take me across all the way so I step onto it and I go all the way halfway across

I fall into the water that's not my faith that let me down it's a bridge that let me down it's a wrong of my faith except it was the wrong thing buddhas the buddhist is facing buddha you ask buddha what do I do to have eternal life how can I get into heaven well the answer you get from buddhism is these things have nothing to do with us you see buddhism is basically a philosophy of how to get on in life not too much good things not too many bad things the middle path the noble path they call it it doesn't know what to do with sin there's no atonement for sin in any other religion but Christianity Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures that's a basis for trusting

Jesus that's a basis for going to Jesus faith faith itself can't save us unless faith is rooted in Christ because Christ died because he was crucified on our behalf because God punished him instead of punishing everyone who will be in heaven we go to Christ and we depend on Christ it's depending on trusting our soul to him it's leaning on him it's following him it's depending on him because he died he paid the price he is the appointed messiah he is the only saviour of the world he is the one who sends out the holy spirit to regenerate his people Christ is the one who has salvation in his hands and our dependence our faith has to be in him now just two things in conclusion how do you know you're a

[37 : 25] Christian what can we learn from these 21 verses about being a Christian how do you know you're trusting Christ how do you know your faith in Christ one you're not afraid of the light verse 20 everyone that doeth evil hateth the light and comes to the light there's a mark you're not afraid are you afraid of Christ if you're not a Christian you should be trembling Christ died for your sins and you are saying to him not interested not my thing I'm not in a religion you've every reason to tremble every reason to tremble the

Christian that's born again loves Christ he's not afraid of Christ he goes to Christ here's another mark verse 21 evidences of the new birth you want the light to examine you he that doeth truth comes to the light that his deeds might be made manifest that they are wrought in God can you say Lord if I'm not right put me right if I'm not in Christ place me in Christ that's the language of true believers the evidence that you have faith in Christ is that you love Christ the theologians say that faith and love are the inseparable twins

I like to say they're the two sides of the one coin if you can say you love Christ your faith is in Christ and if your faith is in Christ you're born again you're a new creation in Christ Jesus whether you feel different or not it's a different thing you've got convictions about Christ Christ died for sinners and he said whoever believes in the son has everlasting life and you're depending on that just in conclusion therefore because of these 21 verses the greatest sin now now that Christ has come now that Christ has died what's the greatest sin it's not being a mass rapist it's not into ethnic cleansing it's not being a suicide bomber the greatest sin is unbelief saying to

God I don't care what you did with your son not interested it's not my thing it's a serious sin sin and it's the root of every other sin you may be committing maybe you say I can't stop pornography I can't stop drugs I can't stop drink I can't stop well they say gambling is the hardest of all some way your problem is you'll never get over these things till you come to Christ the greatest sin is unbelief and the last thing I would say is this because Christ has come because Christ has died don't ever let anyone tell you you've no right to him unsaved people non Christians unbelievers mass rapists have only one right and it's actually not to bread and water we often say well he's entitled to bread and water the only thing before

God that an unbeliever is entitled to is the offer of Christ in the gospel don't pass it by don't let it escape you Christ says says in the gospel this morning in north Tulsa come unto me I will give you rest may God the Holy Spirit make his word effectual to him heal is to jerk money can go as a average