



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 2:23-3:15

“Jesus and Nicodemus”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well let's turn to John chapter 2 for our Scripture reading today as we continue the exposition of this great gospel written, evidently, by the youngest of the apostles. At least, the one who lived the longest, John, the one who leaned upon the breast of Jesus; the disciple whom Jesus loved, as he puts it. And we're reading the last three verses of chapter 2, and the first three verses of chapter 3. John 2:23.

“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man. 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.”

May God bless this reading of his word. The subject for today is “Jesus and Nicodemus, or Teacher or Savior.”

We begin today a study of the ruler who needed a redeemer. Nicodemus was a very unusual man because he preserved a measure of open-mindedness amid the Pharisee conventionalism in which he had been brought up. As it has been said, he thought well of Christ but not well enough.

The same kind of traditional upbringing and the same kind of traditional friendships and relationships that Nicodemus enjoyed in his day are experiences that people have today who are brought up in Christianity. For Christianity has been around a long time and it's possible to have the same attitude towards spiritual things that Nicodemus had. He had grown up in the stuffy atmosphere of the schools and the conventional and traditional was regarded as the God given. And what was traditional came to be identified with that which was truth. And what made it even more difficult for him and for others is the fact that there was a great deal of what was right about the traditional and about the conventional.

But here is a man who in spite of the background in which he found himself was able ultimately to come out into the fresh air of the truthfulness of the things that he had known as traditions. And one must at least admire this in Nicodemus at this stage of his spiritual experience. He was a man who had come to the conviction that God had not fallen dumb and that he was still speaking to men. And in fact acknowledges that he had spoken to men through the signs that Jesus had performed. He advanced from a desire concerning the Lord Jesus Christ through a defense of him, finally to devotion to him.

Nicodemus appears in two other places in the Gospel of John, in the 7th chapter and in the 19th chapter. In the 7th chapter there is the account of the abortive attempt when the authorities sent men out to take the Lord Jesus Christ and bring him captive. And the men who had been sent out when they heard him were so impressed by the things that he said that when they came back they not only did not have him but they praised him for the words that came out of his mouth. And then Nicodemus spoke up when it became evident that many of the leaders wanted to take our Lord and not even give him a chance. He said our law does not condemn a man, does it, until we have at least heard him. And they turned on Nicodemus and said search and see, there is no prophet that comes

out of Galilee. Of course, there was a prophet that came out of Galilee and they overlooked Jonah but generally speaking the prophets didn't.

And so Nicodemus defended him even though his defense was not extremely forthright. And finally in the 19th chapter in the third occurrence of Nicodemus in this gospel, and incidentally only appears in this gospel, there he identifies himself with Joseph of Arimathea, and the two of them take a public stand for the Lord Jesus Christ by going to Pilate and asking for the body of the Lord Jesus and participating in his burial. So one can see the story of Nicodemus from John chapter 3 through John chapter 19 as the story of the growth in faith of a traditionalist.

Now this section that we're looking at has three parts. There is a general description of the ministry of our Lord in the last three verses of chapter 2. Then there is the account of the personal dialogue that Jesus had with Nicodemus in the first ten verses of the 3rd chapter. And finally, a spiritual discourse on the person and work of our Lord follows, beginning at verse 11 and concluding with verse 21. And one gains the impression as you read those verses from verse 11 through verse 21 that is very difficult to distinguish the words of Jesus from the words of John. It seems that the apostle, probably an elderly man by now, had so meditated upon these things that Jesus had said that his words merge into the apostle's words, and the apostle's words into his words. But this is a great section in the Gospel of John under any circumstances and we want to spend several Sundays, the Lord willing, on it.

The last three verses of chapter 2 give us a general description of the early work of our Lord in the city of Jerusalem. And in fact these verses form a preface to three interviews which John describes. He describes not only the interview that Jesus had with Nicodemus but also his interview with the woman of Samaria, a most interesting person. And finally also his interview with those who had come from the noblemen from whom son was to be healed by the Lord Jesus. So there are three interviews and this is the first one.

John begins by saying, “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the signs which he was doing.” Now as you look at these

verses you immediately ask yourself the question, does John mean that there were many people who truly believed with a saving knowledge in the Lord Jesus or does it mean that they believed in him insofar as he performed miracles. That is, did they believe him as a miracle worker? And there are differences in opinion over this. Some orthodox men believe that when we read here, “Many believed in his name,” that that means simply that, they believed in his name with a true faith in him. And the miracles were the reason for their faith.

Others think that John really is not saying this but rather many believed in him as long as they saw the miracles which he was doing. In other words, their faith was not in him to their personal salvation but their faith was the faith in our Lord as a miracle worker. And Nicodemus, who follows in the interview, would be an illustration of it. “Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that you are doing, except God be with him.”

Now we do know this, and I think that all of these orthodox men would agree that signs do not produce faith. Signs may provoke faith in the sense that they identify the one in whom we are to believe. For remember in the Old Testament it was said that the Messiah when he came would perform mighty miracles. This was one of the ways by which Israel was to identify their Messiah. When he came he would heal the sick, he would raise the dead, he would cleanse the lepers, and in this way they would have an infallible direction with respect to the object of their faith. That is, this is the Messiah, the one who is able to do this. You may remember that John the Baptist became a little disturbed over who Jesus was, sent messengers to him and said, “Are you the one in whom we are to believe or do we look for another?” And Jesus gave the messengers of John the message, “You go and tell John what’s happening.” And he cited the passages in the Book of Isaiah which spoke of the miracles that the Messiah would do, “And blessed is the person who is not offended in these things.” And so John got the message, “I’m performing the works that the Messiah performs.”

So it’s possible that what is meant by, “Many believed in his name,” while they were seeing the miracles which he was doing is simply that they believed in him as a miracle worker, as a wonder worker. I’m inclined to think that is what is in mind but the other might be true. John goes on to

say, “But Jesus did not commit himself unto them.” Now that’s an interesting statement because the word translated “commit” is the same as the word believe in the preceding verse. So it’s almost as if John is saying, “He had no faith in their faith.” Many believed in him but he did not believe in them. He had no faith in their faith. Jesus did not commit himself unto them because he knew all men. And needed not that any should testify to him about men because he knew what was in men. Our lord was neither discouraged, nor was he dazzled by the things that were happening. The fact that men gathered round him and praised him for the miracles that he was performing did not dazzle him. It did not discourage him, also, when he knew that their faith might not be true saving faith, but faith in him only as a miracle worker. Jesus did not have any faith in their faith because he knew what was in men. He knew that men were sinners. He knew that men, unless the work of the Holy Spirit operates, men do not have faith in the Messiah who is to come.

Now it’s a striking statement, that last one, in verse 25. He knew what was in man because in the Old Testament it is stated that only God knows what is in the heart of men. If you turn back for just a moment to 1 Kings, chapter 8 and verse 39, there is a passage there which records Solomon’s prayer of dedication at the temple. And in the midst of his prayer of dedication he states in 1 Kings chapter 8, and verse 39, “Then hear Thou in heaven, Thy dwelling place, and forgive and do and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart Thou knowest.” Then in parenthesis in Solomon’s prayer he inserts these words, “For Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men.” So Solomon says the only one who knows the hearts of the children of men is the Lord God himself. But here in John chapter 2 we are told that the Lord Jesus knew what was in man. The conclusion is obvious, our Lord Jesus is the Yahweh of the Old Testament. He is the one who knows the hearts of men. It’s one of those implicit acknowledgements of the deity of the Lord Jesus.

Now having said this as a kind of introduction with a description of the work in Jerusalem John launches into a description of the interview that Nicodemus, the man of the Pharisees, had with the Lord Jesus. This is an example of the insufficient faith referred to in the preceding verses. And

also an exception to his attitude toward all men in that evidently the Lord Jesus moved in such a way in Nicodemus's life that ultimately Nicodemus came to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus himself. Now you can see that this particular incident is related to those preceding words because in verse 24 we read, “Because he knew all men,” and then in verse 25 particularly, “He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in men that was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus.” So here is Nicodemus, he is an example of insufficient faith but also an exception to these general words spoken of in verse 23 through 25.

Now let's think for a moment about Nicodemus himself because we'll understand, I think, a great deal more of the character of this man, and also of others in this gospel, if we remember that it is said concerning him that he was a member of the Pharisee party. This party, the Pharisaic party, originated it seems during the period preceding the Maccabean wars a century or so before the time of Jesus Christ. And those attitudes that those men originated were a kind of reaction against the secularistic spirit of Hellenism in which they were living. And during the second century before Christ the people who abhorred the idolatrous customs of the Greeks and who, during the fierce religious persecution, led by the monstrous Antiochus Epiphanes, stood firm and refused to abandon the faith were called the Hasidim, or something like pietists or even puritans. Now they were the forerunners of the Pharisees. The Pharisees is an expression that means the separatists.

The Pharisees were right in many points of doctrine. They are not illustrations totally of those who are absolutely right in doctrine but wrong in practice. But they were right in many of their doctrines. They believed in divine predestination. They believed in man's moral responsibility. They believed in man's immortality. They believed in the resurrection of the body, contrary to the Sadducees. They believed in the existence of angels and spirits. They believed in rewards and punishments in the future life. And they produced men of unusual skills and renown. For example, there was Gamaliel whose feet the Apostle Paul studied. There was Paul himself, he was a Pharisee. Josephus, the Jewish historian, was also a Pharisee.

The Pharisees were responsible for one basic spiritual era. What they did was to externalize religion. Now I know that we're inclined to think, isn't that sad? Isn't that said that people who knew so much about spiritual things should externalize religion? While at the same time in the Christian church today that is precisely the thing that is occurring in many of our Christian assemblies. The truth of God has been externalized. We have a liturgy and the liturgy is carried out, and often it's very beautiful. In fact, that's the reason that it appeals to so many people. It's beautiful but the vitality is not there. It is gone. And when we think of the Pharisees we ought to turn a look inward. Anything that you do can become traditional. You can even have traditionally no liturgy and if that becomes your tradition and becomes simply for, then of course the reality and vitality goes. It's possible to have a Bible study and for it to become ritualistic. For it to become just as this became with the Pharisees an external kind of religion.

Outward conformity to the law was the important thing for them. The law as they interpreted it. The Lord Jesus denounced the Pharisees because they were characterized in the time of our Lord by exhibitionism and a holier than thou attitude. They loved to pray in the marketplaces, they loved also to sit in the prominent seats. And they also loved to lord it over the people, they were very scrupulous in their adherence to the Mosaic law. And not simply to the law but the law as it was interpreted by ages and ages of tradition. So that, for example, some of them held that a woman should not look into the mirror on the Sabbath because she might see a gray hair and be tempted to pull it out. And if she reached up and pulled out a gray hair that would be working according to the interpretation of the Sabbath law. Some of you ladies are smiling. I don't know why, you don't have any gray hairs. But nevertheless, that might happen, you can see. It was also allowed for an individual to swallow vinegar on the Sabbath day as a remedy for a sore throat, but if you gargled, that was working. And perhaps the climax was, it was possible on the Sabbath day to eat an egg if you intended to kill the hen on another day otherwise you shouldn't eat the egg.

Well the Pharisees hold their influence upon the people to the antipathy of the masses toward the house of Herod, and they made a great deal over it. Here is a man who was a man of the

Pharisees, furthermore evidently he was a man of some age because he says later on, “How can a man, when he is old, enter in to his mother’s womb and be born again?”

So let’s assume that he was an old man and now with the Lord Jesus Christ, a man brought up in all of this traditional religion, and here he comes to this teacher, this man of Nazareth who is not taught in their schools, and asks him a spiritual question. Now you can see from this that here is a man in spite of age, in spite of his acquaintance with tradition, in spite of his identity with it, even though he was a member evidently of the Sanhedrin still he is open enough to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I must say, I have an admiration for Nicodemus even if he had never come to faith for the openness that he manifested toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the first question of the three that Nicodemus asks is an implied question. Now I want you to notice this in verse 2, he said, “Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that you are doing, except God be with him.” Now let me say that that is an implied question and I’ll come back to it in just a moment. Nicodemus asks two other questions. In verse 4 he says, “How can a man be born when he’s old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” And then his third question is in verse 9, “How can these things be?” Now this interview gathers around these three questions but coming back now to this first one. “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.” Now that statement by itself doesn’t have a great deal of significance. It seems quite plain in almost all of the students of the Gospel of John recognize this, that Nicodemus intended to say something else and our Lord anticipated it by interrupting him and saying, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” So I suggest to you that the first question that Nicodemus had in his mind, an implicit question, was this: “Rabbi, we know that you’re a teacher, come from God because no one can do these miracles that you’re doing except God be with him, so how shall I inherit eternal life? How may I see the Kingdom of God? How may I enter the Kingdom of God?”

Now we know that men frequently ask that question because the lawyer came to Jesus and said, “What thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” The rich man came and said the same thing, “What shall I do that I may have eternal life?” The Lord Jesus goes on to speak about entering the Kingdom of God, for if a person entered the Kingdom of God, he possessed eternal life. If he possessed eternal life he would enter into the Kingdom of God. They are not identical expressions but all who are in the Kingdom of God have received eternal life. And those who have received eternal life are destined for the Kingdom of God. So I submit to you that the question that he intended to ask was, “How may I enter into the Kingdom of God, or how may I have eternal life?” That was his question.

Now he had come by night and, of course, we want to know why he came by night. Some have said he came by night because he was afraid. He was afraid of his colleagues who might see him associating with this person against whom they had begun to plot. Some have said no, it was simply caution. Still others have said no, he came because if he had come in the daytime he would not have had a chance to speak with our Lord for a lengthy period of time and so he came at night when the Lord Jesus would not be occupied with the crowds and he wanted to have a longer discussion with him.

John lays a little bit of stress on it because later on he will say, when he mentions Nicodemus, he is the one who came to Jesus formally and then in the 19th chapter he will say, “He is the one who came to Jesus at the first at night.” So since John frequently sees spiritual significance in the circumstances surrounding him it’s possible that he lays stress upon the fact that he came by night because he illustrates in this a man who is living in the darkness coming to the light, the Lord Jesus Christ.

At any rate, he came by night. Probably caution because of fear of compromising himself with his colleagues. And he said, “Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God.” There are many things that people call the Lord Jesus Christ. Some call him master, some call him Lord. Some call him my Lord and my God like Thomas did. Some call him teacher. In fact, this is

probably the name that is in the back of the minds of most people who have a kind of loose, superficial connection with Christianity. They usually re-echo something like this, “Jesus was a great teacher.”

Now, of course, we’ve been told this over and over again, how can our Lord be a great teacher and tell us that he is the Son of God who gives us eternal life and we fail to believe the things that he teaches. We cannot say that Jesus is a teacher, a good teacher, and not believe the central message that he gave. We do not have the luxury of saying he was a teacher but I don’t accept his teaching. He was a great teacher but I don’t believe in him as the Lord of all because that’s what he taught. So we should be honest with ourselves but we are not honest with ourselves because there are not very many people who call us to account for the words that we say. When we hear a person say he was a great teacher we ought to say, do you believe his teaching? And if they say, “No, I don’t believe his teaching, how can he a great teacher? If he was a great teacher and taught that he was the Son of God and that men have life through him then of course we must believe, we must bow before him or else if we are not willing to believe him we cannot say he’s a great teacher and we have to explain what kind of person he was. Well, he is perhaps a person afflicted with megalomania and thinks that he’s a great person but is deceived.

No Nicodemus comes with one of those patronizing expressions, “Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God.” It’s so much lower than the dignity of our Lord’s person that it’s almost an insult. It’s as if I were to go up to Jack Nicolas and say, “Well Jack, I do acknowledge that you play golf.” How ridiculous. Or if I were to go up to Randy White and say, “Well Randy, I do -- I’m willing to admit that you have put on a football uniform and played a bit on the field.” Why here is the man who’s the greatest golfer of all time and here is another who is one of the outstanding football players of the present generation and we are saying we acknowledge that you play football. Or if I were to say to Sugar Ray Leonard, “I do acknowledge that you’ve pulled on the gloves once or twice.” To call our Lord teacher is just like that. He is so much greater than teacher. If I had gone up to Einstein and said, “I’d like to acknowledge Mr. Einstein that you really are a

scientist,” someone would say, “Don’t you know who this is? He’s the greatest scientist of them all.” So, “Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these signs that you are doing accept God be with him.”

Now he acknowledges that God is with the Lord Jesus Christ. But our Lord interrupts and he says, “Nicodemus, you need more than teaching. To enter the kingdom one must have new birth. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Why is this word “except” upon our Lord’s lips? Well in a moment he will say, “You must be born again.” There is only one reason for this. The necessity of the new birth lies in the nature of man. He has said above, Jesus knew all men he know what was in man, he didn’t need anybody to testify to the nature of man. God is a person in whom there is no darkness at all. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look upon inequity.” Man is a sinner. Man has broken the law of God. Man stands in sin and under guilt. Man is headed for the ultimate condemnation of the second death. So except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God because the only life he has is the life that stands under the judgment of God.

Plutarch has a parable of a man who tried to make a dead body stand upright. And after a long time of trying to make the body stand upright and failing, he is said to have said, [foreign language indistinct]. There is something lacking within. [Laughter] Well that’s the trouble with man, there is something lacking within. Men are sinners. Men offend a holy God. Men have broken the law of God. You have broken the law of God. Every one of you in this room, you have broken the law of God. You stand naturally in sin and under the guilt and condemnation of a broken law. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind and all thy soul, and thy neighbor as thyself.” And if you are seeking to get to heaven apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, that is the only method that is open to you and you have already failed. You have broken the law, you stand under the judgment of God. There is no way in which you can get to heaven as a sinner. That’s why Jesus said, “You must be born again.” This life stands under judgment and if that’s the

life you have, you stand under judgment. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” He will say in a moment, “You cannot enter the Kingdom of God.”

This life is not fit for heaven. Mr. Spurgeon used to say, “If a thief should get into heaven unchanged he would begin by picking the angels’ pockets.” Donald Grey Barnhouse said, “If we went to heaven as we are, we’d wreck the place.” We’d have all the same problems that we have today in heaven. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Born again, what does that mean? Well today that’s a term that’s bandied about by the heehaw kind of Christianity as someone spoke of Christianity recently in Chicago, “The heehaw kind of Christianity that we have today.” I even read the other day about a corporation that had been born again. A born again corporation. What was meant was simply it had had a financial turnaround and so now it looked like it might make some profits. I wonder what a born again corporation would look like.

We have a governor who said he didn’t need to be born again, he was pretty well pleased with the first birth that he had, that’s our present governor. He said a lot of good things but that was one thing that was not good. [Laughter] That only revealed that in realms that have to do with the government he’s been, as far as I can tell, a pretty good governor. But when it comes to spiritual things he’s a neophyte. In fact, he doesn’t understand the first thing about the word of God. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

What does it mean to be born again? Well theologically to be born again is to be regenerated; that is, to be given new life and regeneration, or the new birth, is simply the communication of the divine life by the Holy Spirit, two men who believed through the Holy Spirit. So regeneration is the communication of the divine life to men through the operation of the Holy Spirit and through the word of God. The two important things are communication of life through the Spirit through the word; communication of divine life, another life, new life, to be born again.

Now this expression, “To be born again,” then is not the same as renovation. It’s not the same as going out and saying, “Well I’m making some new resolutions, this is the time for resolutions.” It’s far more than that. It’s not reformation, it’s not education, we are talking about the

gift of new life, something absolutely different. Well, if you ask me to explain all about it I must finally say, “Well I don’t understand everything about it but I’ve seen the evidence of it.”

There are many things about spiritual things that we do not fully understand. In fact, we don’t understand fully the creation but we look about us and we know there is a creation. You ask me to explain the creation of the universe, I cannot do that. But here is the universe. I cannot explain the mystery of the birth of an individual but here are living people. I cannot explain the truth that darting like a flash of lightning into the soul of that student at Oxford University in England transformed his whole life, but I look at George Whitefield and I can see the evidence of what happened in the remarkable ministry that that man had. “Oh Lord,” uttered Alexander Pope one day, “make me a better man.” And his page who understood more about spiritual things than Pope said, “It would be easier to make you a new man.” Because a better man is not enough. A new man is what we need and Jesus said, “Except a man be born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” Earthly distinctions do not qualify. The rich are lost. The poor are lost, the wealthy are lost, the Jews are lost, the gentiles are lost, the Baptists are lost, the Presbyterians are lost, the Methodists are lost, the irreligious are lost, the religious are lost, until they have come to the experience of the new birth.

These distinctions that we set up are human distinctions. The distinction that Jesus sets up is the distinction of the new birth. Men who have not been born again cannot see the Kingdom of God any more than a blind man can see a sunrise or a sunset or a deaf man hear the beauty of the hallelujah chorus. Walter Lippmann many years ago said, “Christ is absolutely right; even with the best will in the world the unregenerate man can only muddle into muddle.” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

Now the Bible tells us something about the way in which a man comes to be born again. We come to be born again through the preaching of the word of God, that the Lord Jesus Christ offered the sacrifice for the sins of sinners and that on the basis of his blood that was shed there a

new covenant has been confirmed and men who come to Christ may receive as a free gift the forgiveness of sins.

Now the Scriptures let us know also the procedure by which this takes place, and it makes it very plain that the way in which God works in the new birth is to sovereignly bestow new life upon individuals who in turn immediately believe the message that they hear. And then having been regenerated and having come to faith, they are installed in the family of God as the children of God. That’s what John has already said here. In John 1, verse 12, he said, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God.” To have the status of the children of God. Even to them that believe on his name, for believing is receiving and receiving is believing. But then he says, “Who were born of God.”

The procedure is obvious. They were born of God and then they believed and then they were installed in the family of God as the children of God. John says the same thing in 1 John 5:1. If you don’t like what I’m saying, like what John says. I’d be happy if you said, “I don’t believe Dr. Johnson, I just believe John.” John said in 1 John 5:1, “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ or the Son of God has been born of God.” Everyone who believes, present tense, has been born, perfect tense. Birth first, believing immediately, through the word that comes. Installation in the body as the children of God. This is the way God operates. He operates sovereignly. What do I do, I preach the word of God, it’s very much like a man throwing firecrackers out into an audience and then an explosion takes place here when God the Holy Spirit uses the word and brings new life and faith comes as the word of God is proclaimed. And there a person becomes a member of the family of God, one of the children of God. That’s why it’s exciting to give out the message. Not only here but man to man, woman to woman, man to woman, woman to man, because God works through the word and he works sovereignly.

This is not John’s doctrine either. Paul says in Roman’s chapter 8 that, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” But he said then, “Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit; if so be, the Spirit of God dwells in you.” He says, “The carnal mind is enmity against God, it’s not subject to the

law of God, neither indeed can be.” Do you know what that means? That means that the man of the flesh cannot please God. Does faith please God? Why of course faith pleases God. But the man who is in the flesh cannot please God. What does he need? He needs an operation of God the Holy Spirit by which he is taken out of the flesh and given new life, being placed in Christ. Then he may believe and please God. That’s what Paul means when he says, “The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, it’s not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be so that they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” But ye, you believers, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, he has taken us out of the flesh, put us in the Spirit, and we have pleased God by the faith that resulted. That’s what it means, to be born again, to be the recipient of the sovereign work of God in our salvation. Oh what a difference that makes. George Whitefield was a man who had received that.

So what may we say? Our time is up. Well, one birth is not enough. No matter how nice it may have been, no matter how good it may have been, no matter how a cultural plain you may live, one birth is not enough. It does not take me far enough, it fits me only for this physical and mortal life. I must be born again.

But the Scriptures reveal a plan for my inadequacy and it is the adequacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. The, “Except a man be born again,” is met by the, “Ye must be born again,” and then finally and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up. And Jesus lifted up for the sins of sinners, has made it possible for us to have two births and thus the teacher becomes more than a teacher, he becomes a savior.

May I ask you this morning: Is he your savior? Have you thought of him simply as a teacher but you have rejected his teaching? Have you thought of him as a great teacher but have overlooked the fact that this great teacher said that he was the Son of God? That he actually possessed deity and that he also made a new covenant in his blood for the remission of sins? And that men who believed in him may have everlasting life? And furthermore, that only men who believed in him may have eternal life? Have you realized that this was his teaching? “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh under the Father but by me.” And have you come? Or are you honest, really honest, in

your unbelief and are you saying, “I don’t think he was a great teacher, I think he was a liar, or else I think he was deceived?” For that’s what you should honestly say if you don’t receive the message of the Lord Jesus Christ. May God help us to realize that he is more than a teacher, he is the Son of God. His words are to be believed and when we flee to him for salvation he freely installs us in the family of God through the new birth as the children of God. Come to Christ. Come to him, believe in him. Turn your trust away from the world or your self-righteousness, or your position, or whatever it may be, your religion, your observances. Come to Christ. Lean on him and you shall become a Son of God. May God help you to come to him.

[Prayer] We thank Thee Lord for these wonderful words, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Lord, may there be not one person leave this audience, young or old, who does not know in their own innermost being the new birth. We commit them to Thee because we know that the work of the Holy Spirit is a...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]