

John 3:1

by Worth Ellis

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of being born again through faith in Jesus Christ to enter the kingdom of God.

Duration: 42:45

Scripture: John 1:12, John 3:1, John 3:3, Titus 3:5, James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 Peter 2:2

Topics: "Human Nature", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher tells a story about a man who was concerned about his protege and wanted to see if he had changed. The man searched for his protege and found tracks that led him to a pig pen. The preacher emphasizes that the man found the pig in the pig pen because that which is pig is pig. The message of the sermon is that no matter how much you try to clean up or join someone to a church, if their nature is still sinful, they will remain unchanged.

Transcript

I'm thankful, I'm happy, and tremendously surprised to be with you. I never thought I'd make it. And one of my favorite brethren had not put me in a corner, and literally told me, you're not going to wiggle out of this.

He said, I'm convinced, without a doubt, it's the will of God that you speak today, no matter whether you make out good or whether you make out bad. I said, well, putting it like that, I guess I'll have to. So, if you're going to preach, you need something to preach from.

And so we'll read from John's Gospel, chapter 3. The third chapter of the Gospel of John. Verse 1, John chapter 3, verse 1. There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. And the same came to Jesus for a night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no man can do the miracles that you are doing unless God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And Nicodemus said unto him, How can a man be born when he is 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 the kingdom of God. 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. Now the wind blows wherever it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but you cannot tell where it came from, and neither can you tell where it is going. And so is everyone that is born of the Spirit of God.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a teacher in Israel, and know not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness. If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? No man has ascended up to heaven but he who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven. As Moses lifted up the serpents in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes 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 who believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

This is the condemnation, for this is the test by which men are judged, that light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. I was talking to a man not too long ago, and he was telling me about a sports figure. And he said, you know, the thing about this man is, he's a born-again Christian.

I looked at him and I said, is there any other kind? Is there any such thing alive on this earth today as a Christian who has never been born again? And you see, practically every truth that is such a vital part of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God in the salvation, needs first of all to be rescued by those who have made it their own personal property for the promotion of their program. Born again. You hear about a fellow who's a great quarterback, and he said, I'm born again.

And I declare, you get to work, you wonder if it always means the same thing. Born again. Born again.

I remember with Jimmy Carter, when he went into the president's office, he said he was born again. And frankly, I believe he is. Now, when it comes to becoming a Christian, there's one thing, one which the Bible speaks with perfect clarity.

The entrance into the family of God is always by way of birth. The gospel of John is universally accepted and recognized as mainly the gospel book of the Bible. And that is confirmed to us in the very opening of this book.

Look at chapter one, and remember now we're talking about being born again. Now, in chapter one and in verse 12, speaking of the Lord Jesus, it says, As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name who were born. Now that's significant.

It says right here, that he gives right to those who come to him, the God who are born. And then he gives us some negatives first, and they're always very interesting. Not of blood, that means you cannot inherit salvation.

Just because your mother or your daddy may be a Christian, doesn't mean that you can be born a Christian. I remember Brother Wilson saying so many years ago, when a lady told him, said, I'll have you to know, sir, I'm a Christian. Because my dad is a preacher, and my mother and daddy both were

Christians.

I was raised in the Christian home. And I know I'm a Christian because I was raised in the Christian home. He said, my, my, that's interesting.

And he said, young lady, may I tell you something that somebody needs to tell you. That whenever kittens born in the garage become a Cadillac, then you can become a Christian by being born into a Christian family. Now, you can inherit all of the devil's means, this is in your mom and daddy's books.

But I guarantee you, we will not inherit one or other of their goodness. And you cannot inherit eternal life. It's by way of birth.

You have to be born. First of all, it is not by blood. You can't inherit it.

And then the next negative, neither is it by the will of flesh. You cannot decide that you're going to be a Christian, and you come on. That's impossible.

Nor is it by the will of man. In other words, it's not by virtue of you making up your mind or by a human form. None of these things.

Notice, it says in verse 14, this word became flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father. He was full of grace and truth.

But notice it says this, that after mentioning or listening to these negatives, it says, who were born, okay, but of God. You get it? Born of God. There's no such thing in the world as a Christian who has never been born again.

This is the only way you can get in the family. Only with. I remember Johnny Beasley once years ago was having a men's meeting, and we were discussing the gospel and whether it was ever correct to be, as would be called today, bigoted, narrow-minded, and not polemic or voracious.

John said, well, brethren, I'll tell you. Some of the secondary doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the operations of governing of a church and other things, you may be able to give a little and take a little, but it says when it comes to the way to be saved, you cannot give any. You must be so narrow-minded that your ears leap over the top of your head like a basket hound and tie them together in a knot.

There is no room for compromise. There is no ground for argument except the man Jesus said be born again. He will not even get a look at heaven.

Not only will you not get to heaven, but you won't even get a peep at it. Now, that's plain enough. Verily, verily, I say, except the man be born again.

Now, in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 23, we read that Christians are born again by the Spirit of God. In 1 Peter 2, too, words written by Peter to new Christians, he said, listen, as new-born babies, seek ye therefore the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow up in your salvation. In James chapter 1 and verse 18, James said this, He has begotten us again unto a living hope of His own will.

He hath ejected us to a living hope. He died as three fathers, not by works of righteousness, which we have done according to His mercy. He has saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit of God.

1 Peter 1, 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It's a gift of God. It's a gift of God.

And it cannot be possessed, this thing called the new birth, apart from receiving Jesus Christ and being born again. Paul reminds us very clearly in Romans chapter 8, If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. People are foolish enough in their religious thinking to believe you can be born again and know nothing at all about the Spirit of God living within you.

The angelic Spirit of God is the one who regenerates us. He's the one who gives us life. He's the one who renews that life.

And so He must be born again. And the Lord will tell us in a little bit that He must be born both of the Word and of the Spirit. Now I believe by this time the Lord has kind of stirred up Nicodemus' curiosity and then he has a question.

It may not be asking so many words, but it is certainly implied. And having acknowledged the authority of the Lord Jesus, he puts himself in the position where Nicodemus is perfectly justified in asking him this question. I recognize you as a teacher sent from God.

I believe you. You tell me I must be born again. Now I want you to tell me why.

Why? Well, that's a good legitimate question. Not that anybody has a right to know. Why must I be born again? In verse 4, I like the way the Lord Jesus gets right down to business with the sinner.

He says in verse 6, pardon me, That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Now that's clear enough. A man must be born again because that which is born of the flesh is flesh.

That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. And flesh cannot understand or receive the things of God. It's one of the fascinating things about reading my Bible, that the natural man, and that means the man who has been born according to nature, never born by the Spirit of God, natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God.

Neither will he receive them. They are an absolute absurdity to him. You see the condition he's in? I say it in kind, as I know how to say it in a gentler, that no matter what our social status may be, our intellectual status or whatever, there are three things that every unsaved person has in common.

Are you listening? Number one, you are dead. Number two, you are deaf. Number three, you're blind.

You're deaf? Now that alerts you're dumb. Every unsaved person alive today who is not a Christian, when it comes to a knowledge of spiritual things, you are dead, you are deaf, you are dumb, and you are blind. That's why this may surprise you.

I've been reading my Bible, this is the 54th year that I've been a Christian. I've never found anywhere in the Bible where God requires me to understand to be saved. Some of you have been reading it longer, maybe more than I have.

And if you have found a place where it says to be saved, you must understand, you must understand. I found the word believe, that you can believe some things you can't understand. I'll tell you, if my joy and

happiness and blessings as a Christian was limited by the knowledge I have to understand all about Christianity, I'd be on the nigger dot.

Might as well go get me a Big Mac. But listen, when the Lord is speaking to Nicodemus, he wants to introduce him to his worst enemy. And he begins to talk to Nicodemus about the flesh.

Now I can assure you of one thing, that Nicodemus had never heard of the flesh before. I don't think he had any idea in the world what it was. And when you read the flesh in the Bible, sometimes it means all humanity.

Remember when God gave Noah instructions to build the ark? Because the way of mankind, the end will come before I go to destroy all flesh. We'll make you an ark. Sometimes flesh is plain meat.

But most of the times in our New Testament, the word flesh speaks of that, I don't know what to call that bone. It's that thing that's in us that always makes us do what we know we ought not to do. It is a source of conflict in every Christian's life.

In Galatians 5.17 we read these words, Now the flesh wars against the spirit, the spirit wars against the flesh. And I like this plain language of the Bible. The conflict within me does not come so far as I'm concerned from a fight between a little black dog and a little white dog.

The one that wins is the one you say sickle to. The only conflict I have in this body of mine is between the Holy Spirit of God and the flesh that's in me. And Paul says, I know that in me there is no flesh that dwells in no good thing.

And so he says to Nicodemus, now listen, that which is born of the flesh is flesh. And what can you do with the flesh? Well, there are a number of things people do with the flesh. Man never ceases to amaze me by trying to improve on the flesh.

Have you ever been guilty of that? Trying to make the flesh behave? Have you ever tried to make the flesh do right? I hate to get involved in a mess like that. But there are so many things you can do with flesh. And people are trying today, and they're working very diligently to do that.

There are always those good men and women who seem to devote their life to trying to bring everybody else up to the same moral plane upon which they live. I can't remember whether I made this up or whether I heard it. But in a way, it's the only one of God.

Now, for example, once you learn what the flesh is, and I'll tell you something, it's that thing within me that makes me think sometimes when I was put together, they must have left out some pieces. Or they didn't get the job done right. And you know, I got a little used to you.

It doesn't get any better. And I believe it's a biblical fact. Also, it is a fact of history.

Pardon me. All of us here are Christians. The closer you get to heaven, the worse the flesh gets.

I have to hear a real aged person, aged or elderly, dear old white head, brother been saved for 70-some years, preaching. And he wondered about his heart. There was a young man down on the front row when he came down.

He said, brother, could you tell me something? He said, this thing in here you call the flesh is driving me crazy. He said, tell me, when would it ever get better? He said, my brother, I don't know. I've only been saved 70 years.

It does. The secret to victory over the flesh is the realization that God is not in the improvement business. He is not trying to improve people.

He's trying to make them new people. But still, they're going to try. You can make the flesh religious and it will become so very, very pious.

Well, I'll tell you, religious flesh is the most sickening kind of flesh you've ever heard of. Religious flesh. And you can put this unsaved man in the church, teach him a few of the doctrines, and he may like it for a while.

And when you get through making him religious, what do you have? You have pious flesh. If that doesn't do it, then you can educate the flesh. But when you get the flesh educated, what do you have? You make the flesh more intelligent.

There's so many things you can do with the flesh. But when you get through with it, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. God has put the flesh in the place of death.

Our victory over the flesh as Christians is to believe in our co-crucifixion with Christ, at which time He died, we died with Him, and we died at the same time. And when He died through the flesh of the world and everything else, we died with Him. Well, this friend of mine I heard about, he belongs to the Society.

He just spent his whole time. But this job he was trying to accomplish, he put it ahead of his wife, his family, and everything else, always going around looking out for some poor sinner. And if he found one that looked like he was in bad shape, it just broke his heart.

He's going to help him. You've got to do something to help him. Well, the story goes that he and his wife went out riding one Sunday afternoon in the country.

And in that trip, they came to a place where there was a large pasture. And in the middle of the pasture, there was a flock of sheep. It was a real beautiful scene, very peaceful, grazing, not bothering anybody.

And he stopped and feasted his poor eyes upon that scene. And he looked at his wife. He said, Darling, isn't that wonderful? Look at them.

Aren't they sweet? Look at them. And then, the story goes, he left and he drove down into the bottom and started up the hill. And there was another pasture, but it was a different kind.

Well, it was a bunch of pigs. And they were laying around in mud holes. They seemed to enjoy it.

And he said to his wife, Honey, look at those poor, pitiful animals. They don't know how much nicer and better it is to go and juggle, to eat and live in the clover, than to live in the mud hole. I'm going to do something about that.

So he found out who owned the pigs. He said, I'm the man who owns the pigs, I own the sheep. And so he said to the man, I want to buy that pig.

You see that little pig over in that mud hole? And he was contented. He was, as we say, he was as happy as a dead pig in the sunshine. And he stood there watching.

And he expressed his contentment. And you know what he would say? That's all he said. Now, brother, that's a brunt of satisfaction.

So the man says, what do you want with that pig? He said, I'm going to clean him up, and I'm going to teach him a lesson he'll never forget. It's much better to live like sheep than like hogs. And so he bought the little pork chop and put them in a granite sack.

You know what that is? Two hundred pound bags of junk years ago. And he got a rag and put that pig in that sack. He tied the top up, put the pig in the trunk, and carried him home.

He got him in there and put him in the bathtub. And when he got through with him, that pig almost died or something because he had never been so clean in all of his life. And then he powdered him up, presumed him up, put a ribbon around his neck, and then tied a pretty pink ribbon in his little curly tail.

And then he took his pig. He went out to the car. He said, my dear, you sit in the back.

And he sat the pig by him in the front. So he goes off down through the country, and he comes to the sheep, and he takes the pig out to introduce him to the sheep. He puts the pig under his arm, and his wife helps him hold down the bottom strand to help protect the sheep.

He's putting his stitches and goes through with that pig. And that pig is wondering, what on earth is happening to me? He takes him out there. He said, now, when he learned what it's like, he's going to go and live right in the middle of them.

And so he takes him over right in the center of the sheep and sets him down gently. And there's that one lonely pig in the middle of a hundred or so sheep. You know the first thing he said? Mm.

And you know what that kind of mm means? It means this is different. This is different. Then he decided he had to go.

And he came back the next weekend just a little concerned about how his protégé was doing, how much like a sheep the pig had become in a week. He was really interested in seeing about this change. And so he came, and he got down and went through the fence.

And he began to look, and he didn't know what to call him. And so he looked, but he couldn't find him. Well, no sign of his sheep.

And he said, well, no doubt he's found out how wonderful it is to be right in the middle of them. That's where he is right over in the middle. So he makes his way, and he can't find his pig.

But it had been kind of raining, and the ground was soft. And he checked around the perimeter of the spot, and he saw a set of tracks that looked like they were a little different. And he said, I believe that may be him.

And so he followed his track, and he found him going under the fence. And he went on and followed his track, and he found his pig. Now, is there anybody here today who is intelligent enough? And if you're not intelligent enough, or you're brave enough, that you would like to guess where he found his pig?

Anybody? Anybody? Huh? I can't hear you.

In the pig pen? Lord, no. You know you're better than that. Now, do you know why he found that pig in the pig pen? Huh? I'll give you the earliest version.

New translation. He found the pig in the pig pen because that which is pig is pig. Now you can clean him up.

You can even join him to a church for a migration. Many a church would be glad to get a pig, as whoever signed this remembers. When you think of some of the disreputable characters they have among them now, you'd be glad to get a pig.

But the thing about it is, you see, this pig was pig, and you can put him with sheep, but that doesn't make him a pig. This human nature of ours is that guilty culprit within us that makes us do the things that we do. All the time knowing that we should not do them, and yet we do them.

That which is pig is pig. Where do you think you'd have to do to him to make him human? With the sheep. Now when he asks him why, he tells him.

Then he asks him how, in verse 5. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Just as in the natural realm there are two parents, in natural birth there are two parents in spiritual birth. One of the parents in the spiritual birth is the Spirit of God, and the other is the Word of God.

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, and the water is clear and plain enough to reach. We are talking about the Word of God. We've already read that we are born again by the Word of God.

And it is the Spirit of God listening who stirs you up, who does the good work in you. I was just telling my son the other day that I have called him the most affectionate, most precious name for the Holy Spirit. You know what I call him? I don't know if he knows what I'm saying.

I call him my hound from heaven. Bless him, oh bless him. He got on my track like a beagle hound on a rabbit track.

I didn't have a chain, and he didn't let up one bit. And man, I want you to tell you, he put the heat on me. He tore me all to pieces.

And I'll tell you something even better than that. Listen to this brother. He who began a good work in me will continue it until the day of Jesus Christ.

I'll tell you, he ain't going to leave me. He ain't going to leave me until he lands me safe on the streets of heaven, and I'm going to be like the Lord Jesus. And I'll tell you, I'll tell you something.

This is by the Word of God, applied by the Spirit of God to your intellect, to your mind, convincing and convicting you that you are lost. Not that you are just not perfect. He can make you so miserable, you wish you were dead every day.

And some of us have been through a protracted period of conviction like that. And I believe, my friends, that except in some unusual cases, it is normal and natural for a child's birth to be accompanied by travail, pain. And that's why in most cases, you know, the only kind of people that get saved real good are those

that get lost real good.

If I tried to convince you that you were lost, you might say, man, you don't know me. I'm not as sorry about it like you are. But I'll tell you where the Spirit of God does the job on you.

You won't argue with Him. He's going to bring you to the point that He brought me to one day. And I cried out in bitterness and sorrow.

I said, God, You win. I got the words out of my mouth. My life was changed.

And it was through the Word of God, the Spirit of God convicted me. It was through the Word of God that I was born again. It's a life-giving Word.

It has life in it. It has life in it. One of the parents of the new birth is the Holy Spirit of God.

The other is the Word of God. And this is what's meant in this passage. It says that except you are born again of the Spirit of God and of the Word, of the Spirit and of the Word, the Word.

Secondly, not only can you not be saved apart from the regenerating work of the Spirit of God, but you cannot be saved apart from the illuminating work of the Scriptures. And you can be saved in such stressful conditions, in such an emotional state, that you may not even know what's really going on. But once the work is done, you will learn that it was through the Word that it happened.

We also remember this, that when it comes to people being saved, we ought to avoid stereotypes. There are some Christians who have things so stereotyped. And they say, if you weren't saved exactly like I was, then you're not saved.

Well, it depends on what they're talking about. Are they talking about the circumstances connected with their salvation? Then they're wrong. In no two cases exactly alike.

But if they're talking about the way to be saved, then they're right. But we need to remember that God is a God of variety. There were, I think, three men who had their eyes open.

And the Lord opened one man's eyes and said, how are you doing? He said, well, I see men like trees walk. And so he touched him again, and he saw clearly. Then there was another blind man.

And he touched him, and he saw perfectly clear. And then there was another blind man. And his experience was quite different to the other three.

He stuck in that man's eyes, formed a girth and made clay. He put the mud in his eyes. I never figured that out.

Jesus. He helped me with that. He was good with me.

So these three got together at a church meeting. And they were given a testimony. One said, I'll tell you one thing.

Let Jesus touch you one time. It's all it takes. Don't argue with me about it.

That's the only way. And then the other fellow that had touched Christ. He said, man, you just don't know.

You didn't get the whole job. He touched me two times. And then the other man.

And that's it.

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