

Thus Saith God's Word

by Rev. Ted Brooks

"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." (John 3:16)

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again" (Verse 7)
There was a college professor who understood youth as well as he understood his subject. One day in his classroom many gathered to do their recitation. It seemed that he possessed an uncanny second sight by which he could spot the unprepared.

One morning he called upon a young boy to recite his paper. You could tell he had a general idea as to the answer, but it was too general to satisfy the professor. Nor was the young boy satisfied. After stuttering a bit in a wild attempt to find the words, the professor looking on with twinkling eyes, the young boy gave up on his attempt at an alibi. He gave up with one final thought saying, "I know, Doctor, I know, but I just can't put it into words." The professor said to him, "You do not know what you cannot express."

My friend, if you could know a thing and couldn't express it, how could you possibly prove your knowledge? Streams rise in the upland, but they never stay there. The love of Christ is the richest possession of our personal life, but we cannot keep it and have it. Even a church which tries to live for itself alone in due process of time does not live at all.

Oh, my friend, sincerity is the world's prize. Virtue!! The world will put up with the mistaken man, but it despises the man or woman who pretends.

Jesus called upon those who would follow him to be born again. Jesus wants those who are genuine. Jesus did not then and now today want anyone to play a role. Those Pharisees who played the part of pious virtue but who hid within ambitious, scheming, jealous, miserly soul, Jesus, my friend, never spared them. He spared the sinning woman and praised the publican. Oh, friend, there is a battle going on today for sincerity. When Jesus said ye must be born again, he was calling for a complete change, a 100% turn about. He wanted no form that was without the Holy Ghost, no bow of the body that left the soul erect.

Christ himself was ready to die rather than to make the least compromise of principle. Nothing less ought to be asked of his disciples. Oh my friend, nothing, I say again, nothing has brought more dishonor on the name of Christianity than the insincerity of Christians.

"Marvel not that I said unto you, ye just be born again." (Verse 7) Jesus was saying here not to be astonished. I want to be first in your life. When you plan for your days' work, I want to be part of it.

How often we hear these words, "I'm too busy" when we call on someone to aid in a Christian task. "Marvel not that I said ye must be born again." Marvel not that Christ calls us to use the scales of heaven in weighing the things worthwhile on earth. Absurd to die for a cause, to stand up for the weak against the strong, to refuse a forbidden pleasure, to curb a single lust of passion, if death ends all.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." Before you go out to win the world to our faith, let us be sure our faith is sincere. The world is waiting for the man who has been born again, a man, woman, who believes and who lives his beliefs, the man who declares Christ and who reveals him. "Marvel not that I said ye must be born again." A man who lives his Christian faith can rule the world, if he is sincere.

We said last week that the world will stand for awhile, but not forever. We fool ourselves when we think to hide successfully our inconsistencies. We fool ourselves because for a while it is possible to fool others. Our service too may be accepted and on our head may rest the wreath of fame, but someday the test of time will come that will reveal our faults. What you do yesterday, last year or today may have looked all right, but was it insincere, un-trustworthy, waxed?

"Marvel not that I said ye must be born again." The Greek word for sincerity means "searched by the sun." The kind of life that stands the test of the x-rays. The life that does not make believe, marvel not that I say unto thee, you must be born again.

My friend, do you know what the word hypocrite means? It means "One who effects virtue, qualities, or attitudes he or she does not have." "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." Character is what one is in the dark. It is easy to wear the robe of devotion in the fellowship of the saints, to build booths on the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus and the heavenly visitors are with us. What about when we are in a restaurant or in a strange city? Do you silently bow your head and say grace?

The story is told of a person who enters a store and the owner was out. "Well, John," the person said, "I see the master is out so you can give me a little better deal today." John replied, "Sir, my master is always in." "Marvel not that I said unto thee ye must be born again."

Can you stand the floodlight of Christ who searches the dark corners of such a life? Can you say bring up the search light, look, see if there be any shadowy places hiding for lurking devils. Let the wind beat down with its burning heat, let the wind howl and rains drench; the man who permitted the master to shape his soul into his own blessed image has no waxed over places to conceal. There is an ideal for life. This I pray...that ye be sincere.

My friend, God will not overlook sin. Millions are being led astray everyday. My friend, if it is just dying, why is there a judgement ahead of us all?

"Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of God, but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)
"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name, in thy name cast out devils. And then will I profess unto them I never knew you." (Matthew 7:21-23)

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." God will not overlook sin. No matter how hard you varnish it. No matter how many coats of conviction. No matter how pretty you putted your prayers, Jesus said "I never knew you." Those religious works are going on over the top of iniquity. What you have done may seem real. My friend, it is only real when sin is gone out of it. "Marvel not that I said, ye must be born again."

My friend, if there ever was a time preachers need discernment (spiritual), it is today. There are many people, including preachers, who are walking around today doing religious works who have not been purged from sin. Instead of entering into the kingdom of heaven, they are going to be told to depart. If a person has not departed from sin, it makes no difference who his religion is or what religious works he does, he or she will not make it in. Who said it? JESUS!

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." Some have said that the church has become a morgue with a steeple...that the church has or is now in the process of being buried beneath the dirt of religious formalism and complacency, too much like our government...everybody else doing it. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

The church today needs to renew her commitment to Christ. There is nothing new, she has done it before. She has faced the onslaught of Satan before. "And unto the Angel of the church of Sardis write these things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God."

Can I ask you a question? The last time you left church, how was your work before God? Wait now. Push aside all doctrine, the pastor, Sunday school teacher, what matters here is Jesus called upon Sardis to repent. They had a name of being alive. They probably took in service at 9:45 a.m. Worship service at 11 a.m. A doing church, if you will. But Jesus said it was dead. It had the name of being alive, yet Jesus said it was dead. Why? I have found thy works not perfect before God. Not the deacon, clerk, superintendent, nor the pastor, but before God, thy works were dead. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." (John 3:17)

The Bible, my friend, is the voice of the Eternal God. And when it is properly read and studied, St. Peter tells us "That these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (II Peter 1:4) My friend, it is possible for us to be like God in his divine nature. When you and I study a book, we can take on its nature. A doctor studies from a book of medicine. Sooner or later he takes on the nature of a doctor. That doctor can be found preaching what he read. (James 1:21)

God's word saves our souls. "This is life eternal that ye know Him." (John 17:3) You see, my friend, to know Christ is eternal life. There is a power in this blessed book called the Bible when it is properly read and studied. "Wherewithal a young man cleanse his way." (Psalm 119:9) That I might sin not against thee. (Psalm 119:11) Are you full of uncleanness? You want to be made white? Dig into God's word day and night. Its promises are life to all them who will search the scripture with a readiness of mind. Search, he tells us, to see if these things are so. (Acts 17:11)

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."
Brother Brooks is available for pastoral work. If you are in need of a pastor, seek the face of God. If he leads you, Bro. Brooks can be reached at 910-521-2131.

In the Armed Forces

Army Pvt. Clifton C. Oxendine has graduated from basic combat training at Fort Jackson, Columbia, S.C.

During the training, the soldier received instruction and practice in drill and ceremony, marching, rifle marksmanship, armed and unarmed combat, map reading, field

tactics, military courtesy, military justice, physical fitness, first aid, and Army history and traditions.

Oxendine is the son of Edwinna and Eugene Jacobs of 413 Preston Road, Maxton, N.C.

He is a 2000 graduate of Purnell Swett High School, Pembroke, N.C.

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Johnnie Frye of Cameron

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