

Thus Saith God's Word

by Rev. Ted Brooks

"Ye Must Be Born Again"

"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, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it willeth and thou hearest the sound of it, but canst not tell from where it cometh and where it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:6-8)

Strange words, Born Again. Born from on high. Greek word "Aw-A-then" again, from he beginning, a very first, to be brought forth, to be delivered, a supernatural birth, anew from above. James declared "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures" (James 1:18)

Peter declared we were begotten again by a lively hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3) Being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the word of God. (Verse 23) Born again means to crucify. It means a cross, a stake-the word of the cross. It is a step over from the love of the world to the love of Christ. It is a departure from "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications out of your mouth."

It is a step over from "The world to where we lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds."

In this step over we put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. It is a step over "As the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering."

It is a step over to "forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye and above all these things put on charity which is the bond of perfection." (Colossians 3:14)

No wonder Nicodemus cried out, How can these things be? Oh my friend, to be born again is a gift from God. Too many have basically tried to live a good life, saying to themselves when I die my good will outweigh the bad. Scripture tells us "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

Someone said, "Believe in God and pray to him." James tells us "Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well, the devil also believes and trembles." (James 2:19)

Most persons, when they ask the question, what must I do to be saved, most are told to live basically good lives and surely when you die, God will see the good you have done. He said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again, not of flesh and blood, but by the Spirit" and Christ declares so is everyone born of the spirit. Salvation is a gift, my friend. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee O Lord. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. My tears have been my meat day and night." (Psalm 42:1-3)

My friend, the churches are filled with persons who hold to the external things of life. They have been lost in a social gospel. Their main theme has never been Jesus, but rather hospital, orphan homes, and organized charities. Oh my friend, when the woman came to Jesus he did not point her to a social gospel but rather he said, "I would have given thee living water." (John 4:1-14)

The main stream is Jesus. Folks need to know eternal life is a gift from God. People today need this water of life. It is not a new roof, clothes. People need Jesus. He is the main stream in all who will come.

A lawyer came to Jesus, tempting him. "Master which is the greatest commandment in the law?" Notice the reply of Jesus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:36-40)

Jesus did not say to this lawyer, live good and be satisfied with the shallows of life. No, my friend, Jesus pointed him to the deep waters upon which he could sail. Why rave about the rushing stream and forget about the mountain spring? Why measure Christianity in the terms of organized charities? Jesus said to Nicodemus "Ye must be born again." In other words, Nicodemus make me your mainstream of life. No need to sit in a cave that is cold and dark, come outside where the sun is shining. Be born again. Put off that old man of hate, malice, get in on the mountain side spring. Drink this water that has eternal life.

There are some of you in the church whom Satan has got side tracked. It has been a long time since you have declared that you are a Soldier of the Cross. Been a long time since you declared that for him you will live and for him you will die. Our President of the United States cannot win this war with bombs. No sir, the enemy needs to hear us tell the old story, how a savior came from glory and became the mainstream of our lives. Tell them we were once slaves to sin. We went about to seal, kill and rob, but we met Jesus who stood and said, ye must be born again. We too were slaves to sin, but the Almighty, the Main Stream, has set us free. We were ready to perish but the Mainstream placed us in a goodly land. We till the soil no more. Our wealth is no longer reckoned in sheaves of corn or baskets of fruit, in flocks or herds, or broad acres, for we have found a wealth of a different kind than that which is counted in money. It is more precious than gold. "Sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ in his main stream is an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." (1 Peter 1:2-4)

Ye must be born again. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life." (John 5:23-24) Ye must be born again.

In closing let me say this. We are now living in a time that the sermon on "Ye Must Be Born Again" is no longer believed to be truth. Let me share with you a television interview shared by two well known gospel preachers.

One said to the other, tell me, what do you think is the future of Christianity? Well, Christianity and being a true believer, you know, I think there is the body of Christ. This comes from all the Christian groups around the world, outside the Christian groups, I think everybody who loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they are conscious of it or not, they are members of the body of Christ. And I don't think that we are going to see a great sweeping revival that will turn the whole world to Christ at any time.

I think James answered that. The Apostle James in the first Council in Jerusalem, he said that God's purpose for this age is to call out a people for his name. And that is what God is doing today. He is calling people out of the world for his name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world or the non-believing world, they are members of the body of Christ because they have been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don't have, and I think that they are saved, and they are going to be with us in heaven.

Then follow the second question: what I hear you saying is that it is possible for Jesus Christ to come into human hearts and souls and lives, even if they have been born in darkness and have never had exposure to the Bible. Is that a correct interpretation of what you are saying?

Yes, it is because I believe that I have met people in various parts of the world in tribal situations that they have never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible and never heard of Jesus, but they believed in their hearts that there was a God and they have tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they live.

Then said the other preacher, his face beaming, I am so thrilled to hear you say this, there is a wildness in God's mercy.

The other preacher said there is. There definitely is.

This television interview of Billy Graham and Robert Schuller was aired May 31, 1997.

My friend, millions of persons have died since the beginning of time and if this whole world was to turn to ashes, God's word is eternal. It's plan for man is eternal. It is already settled in heaven. Hear the Psalmist David, "Forever O Lord, they word is settled in heaven." (Psalm 119:89)

Thy word is settled and will be carried out on earth to the letter. This is why we may know the infinite details of the program of God from eternity past into all eternity future.

We are told to stand fast without change, as the plan of God for man is declared to be. (Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, 1 Peter 1:23-25). Please read. Conclusion next week.

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From the Desk of the Superintendent

by Dr. Barry Harding, Public Schools of Robeson County

Despite the fact that education deserves our attention all through the year, the observance of American Education Week provides us with a week during which special attention is focused on the subject. During the week, for example, we highlight some of the ways we impart education to our almost 24,000 students as well as ways that you might be able to help.

You have often heard the saying that "It takes the whole village to educate a child". During American Education Week, it's well to think about that saying and some of the many ways that the village can contribute to education. It's too bad that there are some parents who feel that their irresponsibility towards their child's education ends when they drop their child off at the school house door. If they were to stop and think about it, they actually have supervision for their child most of every weekday and all weekend long. The school only has supervision over their child for less than a third of the school day and none of the weekend. It's during the time that their students are under parent or family supervision the latter should engage in an ongoing effort to create and maintain an atmosphere that stresses the importance of education and respect for teachers and classmates.

At the risk of sounding like I'm trying to recruit volunteers, I believe it's important to consider the positive effect that can come from the efforts of civic club members and industry employees to contribute to the education of our young people. When area industries allow their employees to visit the schools to explain what those industries do, it's a definite aid to education. They may help students to focus on what they would like to do with their lives upon graduation. It may help the students to decide on a college major.

They may get the same kind of advantage when civic club members visit the school to offer tutoring or mentoring services. The time they contribute is invaluable in taking pressure off teachers while helping to provide more instructional time to the students—time which the classroom teacher may not have. Other people who may have had the advantage of traveling to faraway places are in a position to allow students to compare places they've read about in their textbooks with the information provided by people who have actually visited those places. It's a way of broadening the students' horizon thus adding to their education.

The church can be a vital part of contributing to students' education by encouraging congregants to participate in some of the educational programs I've mentioned and, also, by recognizing young congregants for special school accomplishments.

While teachers and principals are in the vanguard of the educational process, the rest of the members of the "village" must do whatever they can to assure the success of that process. During American Education Week would be a good time to reflect on what you can do year-round to help.

Thomas Jefferson introduced many of America's favorite foods when he returned from trips to Europe. He was one of the first Americans to eat tomatoes, serve macaroni or ice cream, plant rice, and serve French fries with steak., etc.

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Search for Truth

by Elder Joseph Bullard

THE SACRED TITHE

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. Ps. 116:14.

Although it is true that by giving we develop a generous nature, for the Christian there must also be a basic direction to our giving. The Christian recognizes there is more to giving than sharing our goods with our relatives, or exchanging gifts at Christmas (which may have little of the spirit of giving in it) or even of extending aid to the less fortunate. Christian giving is Godward. Gifts will continue to be made to the poor and needy, but they will be made with God in mind.

The Christian will give to God. Some may rationalize that they are paying their tithe when they give a tenth of their income to the Community Chest or to some needy family, but the Christian hears God's command to pay the tithe to Him. "Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house" (Mal. 3:10), the Lord says. The tithe is not for the individual to apportion or assign. It goes to the Lord through His church. The Lord has designated a special purpose for His tithe. Paul explained it to the church at Corinth. He reminded them that under the system of sacrifices the priests sustained themselves by what was brought to the altar. Paul says the same principle was to continue under the gospel dispensation, even though no animals would be sacrificed. "In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14).

According to Bible principle, the tithe is to be computed and paid to the Lord as the "first fruits" of our income (Prov. 3:9). This expression applies both to time and position. The tithe should be considered first, or foremost, of all our obligations, and it should be set aside first, before we spend the remainder.

Because the tithe is sacred to the Lord, it is not for us to decide how to spend it. Sometimes we may feel the church is not using the tithe properly, or that some minister is not worthy to be paid by the tithe. Or a church worker may feel he has been defrauded by his employing organization in some way and that he can recoup his losses by holding back on his tithe. But we should remember the experience of Ananias and Sapphira. The tithe is not for playing games.

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