

BAPTISM ESSENTIAL TO OBEDIENCE

NO. 2339

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS'S-DAY, DECEMBER 17, 1893
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”
Mark 16:16

IF our congregations were what they ought to be, it would be a very simple matter to preach, for a sermon would then only need to be like the orders given by a commanding officer to his troops—short, sharp, plain, clear, distinct. Our hearers would not need illustrations and metaphors—they would ask simply to be told what they must do to be saved—and the more plainly they could be told, the better pleased would they be.

I am going to try this evening to preach that kind of sermon, sinking the preacher into the teller of good news, plainly speaking of the way of salvation. If you want to be saved, listen to my message. If you do not care for salvation, yet, perhaps, while you hear it, you may be set a-longing, and God may bless you.

My text is preceded and followed by other important words, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” The Gospel, then, is for “every creature.” Wherever there is a man, woman, or child, an intelligent creature, the Gospel is to be preached to such a person. You who are gathered tonight are clearly within that description and therefore the Gospel is to be preached to you.

But if we are commanded to preach it, it is implied that you are commanded to hear it. To hear it without attention, to hear it without resolving to obey it, will be useless work. Hear it, therefore, as I desire to preach it, remembering that Christ stands here to hear me preach and to mark how you accept the message from Himself that I am to deliver.

This Gospel is sent to every creature because every creature needs it. Whether the creature knows it or not, he is lost—lost by nature and lost by practice, too—so much lost that he cannot save himself. He needs to be saved. Will you all believe that? If you have not believed in Christ, you are lost, and you cannot save yourself. Begin by believing that fact. But then rejoice that there is sent to you a Gospel which can save you, a Gospel which is adapted and meant for the salvation of just such a person as you are, for to you God says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

My fellow Christians, you who have believed in Christ, it is time for us to bestir ourselves, for we have not preached the Gospel to every creature yet by a very long way. Some persons have never preached it to anybody—some, I mean, of the very persons who are commanded to preach it to every creature. A quaint preacher says that if some of God’s people were paid ten dollars an hour for all that they have done for their Lord, they have not earned enough yet to buy a cake of gingerbread, and I am afraid that statement is true.

So very little have some persons done for the spread of the Gospel that the world is none the better for their being in it. Do I speak too severely? If I do, you can easily pass over what I say, but if not, if it be so that any here have never yet fairly and squarely spoken of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, begin at once. When you get home tonight tell out the Gospel to your nearest relative, and go out tomorrow to your next door neighbor, or to the friend whom you can most easily reach, and tell them of the good news that your Lord has revealed to you, and so help to preach the Gospel to every creature.

An army chaplain once said to the Duke of Wellington, “Do you think that it is of any use our taking the Gospel to the hill tribes in India? Will they ever receive it?” The duke replied, “What are your marching orders?” That was the only answer he gave. Stern disciplinarian as that great soldier was, he only wanted marching orders and he obeyed—and he meant that every soldier of the cross must obey the marching orders of Christ, his great Commander. Go you, therefore, as far as your position and capabilities allow you, and tell to every creature the word of the Gospel as it is recorded in my text, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

I want to do my part tonight as far as my feeble voice will permit me. And I will speak a few words, first, *concerning belief*. Secondly, *concerning baptism*. And thirdly, *concerning being saved*. We shall get the whole text clearly in considering those three points.

I. First, CONCERNING BELIEVING.

This is the main point, this is the hinge of salvation, for he that believes in Christ is not condemned—he that believes in Him has everlasting life.

Now, concerning believing, let me, ask, first, *What is to be believed?* Well, you are to believe that you have broken the law of God and that consequently you are under condemnation. But that God, in His infinite mercy, has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world that you might live through Him. His divine Son—His only-begotten Son—was born of Mary, as a man of the substance of His mother, feeling as we do and was in all respects most truly man.

Being here, He obeyed His Father’s will and when the time came, He gave Himself up as a sacrifice for guilty men. He died, “the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Himself being without sin, He took upon Himself the sin of His people, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” Being found with human sin imputed to Him, He suffered in the room, and place, and stead of those whose sins He bore.

On the cross His blood was shed, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, but by that shedding of blood He blotted out the iniquity of all those who put their trust in Him. This is what you have to believe, that—

***“He bore, that you might never bear,
His Father’s righteous ire.”***

He was laid in the grave and on the third day He came forth from the tomb, rising again for the justification of His people as He was crucified for their offenses. After a while He went up into the highest heaven and He is now enthroned there, King of kings, and Lord of lords. He sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, and there He pleads and makes intercession for sinners.

Believe this, “Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” He is exalted on high, a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins. That is what is to be believed. I might go into a great many details, but I shall not do so tonight. The essence of what is to be believed is that Jesus Christ is given of God unto us, that by His death He might put away sin, and we might be reconciled to God, and that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

That I may answer this question better, let me correct it, or turn it into another, and then answer that. The question is not so much *what* is to be believed, as *Who is to be believed?* For, in very deed, the believing of a certain thing to be true, though that may be helpful, is not the whole of the matter. I, believing a thing to be true, trust myself to that truth—there is faith, the act of trust.

But if we would be saved, we must trust a Person. We must trust the Lord Jesus Christ. You are not so much saved by believing a dogma, as by trusting a Person—you must believe the dogma, or you will not trust the Person, but believing the doctrine, you then come, and put your trust in the Person about whom that doctrine is taught. If you would be saved, trust yourself with Jesus Christ.

He, who died, ever lives, and “He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him.” Saving faith is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting Him truly, wholly, solely, constantly,

trusting Him now. Behold Him, then, the Son of God, enthroned in glory. Lay your soul and all its sins at His dear feet and trust in Him to save you—and He will do it.

Many will put a third question—*Why is He to be trusted?* I should like to answer that by another—Why is He not to be trusted? When one said to me, the other day, “I cannot trust Christ,” I inquired, “Can you trust me?” And when the quick reply was, as it ought to be from a hearer to a minister, “Yes, sir, I do trust you,” I said, “Well, then, you certainly can trust the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is infinitely more worthy of being trusted than ever I can be.”

Cannot trust Christ? That is a wonderful piece of Satanic delusion. I can say tonight that I can not only trust my soul to Christ, but that if I had as many souls as there are grains of sand on the seashore, I could implicitly trust them all to Him. Why should I not? He is “God over all, blessed forever,” and He is Man, tender and gentle—therefore He ought to be trusted.

O my hearer, can you look the crucified Christ in the face and say that you cannot trust Him? Can you see the bloody sweat in the garden, can you gaze upon the nailed hands and feet, and pierced side of this suffering Man, who is at the same time very God of very God, and can you then say that it is hard to trust Him? Oh, no! He is so true, so noble, so generous, so faithful that I beseech you to trust Him and to trust Him now.

That raises another question—*When is Christ to be trusted?* And the answer is, *Now*. He was never more worthy to be trusted than He is tonight and you never more needed a Savior than you do tonight. You are, perhaps, talking about trusting Christ at some future time. You tell me that you do not trust So-and-so, but that you hope to trust him one of these days. I will not give a penny for such a hope as that. No, friend, if at any future time you should deem Christ worthy of your confidence, He is worthy of your trust tonight for He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

Just as you are, in that pew, or sitting in the aisle, Christ deserves your confidence—and I pray you to give it to Him. Cast your guilty soul on Him this very moment. Live not another second in unbelief, for that unbelief is a slander on my Lord, a grievous injury to His dear, faithful love. Now, while the word is quitting my lip—as it reaches your ear—say and mean it, “I do believe. I will trust Jesus. I yield myself to Christ and take Him to be my Savior.”

“If I do that,” says one, “*when will the blessing come?*” The text says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” and the blessing will come at once. Swift as the lightning flash is the act which saves the soul. One moment a man may be black with accumulated sin—the next moment he may be white as the driven snow. It takes no time for God to blot out iniquity. We pass in an instant from death to life, from darkness into marvelous light.

I am praying that while I speak to you in feebleness, God may work with His almighty power—with that right hand that rent the Red Sea in twain, that the ransomed of the Lord might cross over dry-shod. May He come and save the people made ready by His grace for this night of His glorious power, leading them immediately to believe and giving them, at once as the result of their faith, reconciliation to God and justification by Christ Jesus!

Here let me correct a mistake into which some people fall. They say, “Do you exhort us to believe?” I do, indeed, with all my heart. “But sir, faith is the work of the Spirit of God.” Yes, did I ever say that it was not? I insist upon it continually that, wherever there is any faith, it is worked in us by the Spirit of God. But listen.

Did I ever tell you the Spirit of God believed for us, or did you ever read anything in Scripture approximating to that statement? No, the Spirit of God leads us to believe, but *we* distinctly believe and it is *our* faith that saves us—it is not that the Holy Spirit believes instead of us and we lie still, like a man under the surgeon’s knife. Oh, dear, no! Every faculty is awakened and aroused by the Spirit of God. We see that Christ can save and we believe it. We believe that He will save and we trust Him to save us. It is our own act and deed—it cannot be anybody else’s act and deed.

You cannot believe for another. There can be nothing like sponsorship here, and the Holy Ghost Himself cannot believe for you. It is not written, “Let the Holy Ghost believe for you.” That would be

absurd. But it is written, “Believe thou.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” With your own proper mind and heart you must believe in Jesus Christ if you would be saved.

I do not know that I need say more concerning believing. I have often tried to explain it, I am afraid that I have not always made it as plain as I have intended. Only let me warn you not to say, “I understand the plan of salvation very well. Dear sir, I am sure I do. I do not need it explained to me, I understand it perfectly.”

My dear friend, it is one thing to understand the plan of salvation and quite another thing to believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of your soul. It is a pitiless night, the rain is pouring down and here is a man, sitting out in the street, exposed to the ill weather, and he has got a plan of a house down there on the wet pavement. And He says, “I am all right. I understand the plan of a house quite well.” You see, he is looking at the plan—he has a view of the front of the house—he knows where the windows and doors should be. And he has a ground plan, too. He can see where the kitchen is and the passage to the kitchen, and he knows the arrangement of all the rooms.

But my dear fellow, you are getting wet through, the storm is raging—why do you not go into the house for shelter? “Do not talk to me,” he says, “I understand the plan of a house very well.” The man is a fool if he talks like that. Everybody concludes that he is out of his mind and what is he who is satisfied with understanding the plan of salvation, but who does not come to Christ and put his trust in Him?

Come to Him now, I beseech you. You who do not know so much about the plan of salvation, come to Jesus—come and trust Him—trust Him now.

II. Now, in the second place, a little CONCERNING BAPTISM, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

Please observe that I did not make the text. Perhaps if I had made it, I should have left out that piece about baptism, but I have had no hand in making the Bible—I am obliged to take God’s Word as I find it, and here I read these words of our Lord Jesus Christ, “He that believeth *and is baptized* shall be saved.”

“Do not dwell on the baptism,” says one, “leave that out.” That is what you say, my dear sir. I cannot see your face, but I do not believe that you are my master. My Master is the Lord who taught holy men to write this Book and I can only go by the Book. The Book has the baptism in it, so I must stick to the truth as it is in the Book, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

First, let me remind you that our Savior’s words teach us that *baptism follows faith*, “He that believeth and is baptized.” Never neglect the order of things in the Bible. If God puts them one, two, three—do not you put them three, two, one. You never had a servant, I hope, who twisted your orders out of order. Did you ever say to her, “Mary, now go and sweep the parlor, and afterwards take the duster and dust the table, and the shelves, and the books”? Did she come to you some time after, and say, “Madam, I have done as you commanded me. I dusted the table, and the shelves, and the books, and then I swept the room”? Every good housewife here knows what would happen from turning her orders upside down in that fashion.

Now, a great many in the Christian church at the present day have put it thus, “He that is baptized and believeth.” I am not one of those maidservants. I dare not turn my Master’s orders upside down. You have no right to baptize people till they have believed in Christ as their Savior. Remember how Philip put it to the Ethiopian eunuch when that worthy man said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” Philip answered, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.”

And if you do not believe with all your heart, you ought not to be baptized—you have no right to this ordinance of Christ unless you are a Christian. “He that believeth and is baptized”—that is the Scriptural order. Read the New Testament impartially and you will always find that those who were baptized were believers. They believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and then they were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Next, I would have you notice that this matter of *baptism is often linked with faith*. Over and over again it is put so in the New Testament, and there are passages which I will not quote tonight, in which

baptism has a peculiar prominence given to it in connection with the work of salvation. It might have been put, “He that believeth and cometh to the communion table shall be saved,” but it is not so written.

Some churches have exalted what they call, “The Holy Eucharist,” into a very elevated position indeed, far beyond what Scripture has ever accorded to it—yet the Lord’s supper has never had given to it in the Word of God the position of being put side by side with faith, as baptism is in this and other passages. I am not going to dwell upon that point tonight. I merely tell you what is the teaching of the New Testament. You shall give your own account of it if you please, but our appeal is, “to the law and to the testimony.”

This much also I must say, that *it is not possible that there can be anything saving in the baptism itself*. The act of applying water in anyway whatever cannot wash away a single sin. That would be going back to the old covenant of works, the old ceremonies of the Mosaic law. All the washings under the law—and they were very many—never washed one sin away. Nor can any washing in water take away the sin of any man. Even the tears of Christ are never spoken of as putting away sin—it is His precious blood alone that cleanses away the sin of men.

In my text, while it says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” yet, when the condemnation is announced, it is simply, “He that believeth not shall be damned,” and the matter of baptism is not mentioned, for there are many who believe, but who are not baptized, and who cannot be—as the dying thief, for instance—yet are they assuredly saved. Nevertheless, here stands my text and I cannot alter it, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

Why do you suppose that baptism is put into this prominent position? I think that it is for this reason—*baptism is the outward expression of the inward faith*. He who believes in Christ with his heart confesses his faith before God and before the church of God by being baptized. Now, the faith that speaks thus is not a dumb faith. It is not a cowardly faith. It is not a sneaking faith. Paul puts the matter thus, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

But why is confession so necessary to prove true faith? I answer that it is necessary to the very existence of the church of God, for, if I may be a believer and never confess my faith, you may be a believer and never confess your faith, and all round we should thus have a company of men believing, but none of them confessing. And where would be the outward ordinances of the church of Christ at all? Where would be any minister? Where would be the setting up and growing of the kingdom of Christ?

For a hundred reasons, it is absolutely needful for Christ’s kingdom that the believer should openly confess his faith. Do you not see that? And hence baptism, being God’s way of our openly confessing our faith, He requires it to be added to faith that the faith may be a confessing faith, not a cowardly faith—that the faith may be an open faith, not a private faith—that so the faith may be a working faith, influencing our life and the life of others, and not a mere secret attempt for self-salvation by a silent faith which dares not acknowledge Christ.

Remember those words of the Lord Jesus, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me,” (and in that place it means, “He who does not confess me”) “before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” There is, therefore, no regenerating efficacy about water, or about immersion, or about baptism in any shape or form, but it is needful as the outward visible expression of the inward spiritual faith by which the soul is saved.

And dear friends, once more, *baptism is often the test of obedience*. He that believeth in Christ takes Him to be his Master as well as his Savior. And Christ, therefore, says to him, “Go and do so-and-so.” If the man refuses to do it, he thereby proves that he does not intend to be the disciple of the Master. “Oh!” says one, “you know that baptism is a nonessential.”

Have I not begged you to cease such idle and wicked talk as that? Have you a servant? Do you go to business early in the morning? Do you like a cup of tea at six o’clock, before you start for the city? The

maid does not bring it to you and you ask, “Why have I not had my tea brought to me?” “Oh!” she answers, “it is non-essential. You can do your business very well without that cup of tea.” Let such a reply as that be repeated, or let it be given only once, and I will tell you what will be non-essential, it will be non-essential for you to keep that girl any longer in your house. You will want another servant, for you will say, “Clearly she is no servant of mine. She sets herself up as the mistress of the house, for she begins to judge my commands and to say that this one is essential and that one is not essential.”

What do you mean by “non-essential”? “I mean that I can be saved without being baptized.” Will you dare to say that wicked sentence over again? “I mean that I can be saved without being baptized.” You mean creature! So you will do nothing that Christ commands, if you can be saved without doing it? You are hardly worth saving at all! A man who always wants to be paid for what he does, whose one idea of religion is that he will do what is essential to his own salvation, only cares to save his own skin and Christ may go where He likes. Clearly, you are no servant of His. You need to be saved from such a disreputable, miserable state of mind—and may the Lord save you!

Oftentimes, I believe that this little matter of believers’ baptism is the test of the sincerity of our profession of love to Him. It would have been all the same, it may be, if the Lord Jesus Christ had said, “Pick up six stones off the ground, and carry them in your pocket, and you shall be saved.” Somebody would have said, “That stone-picking is a non-essential.” It becomes essential as soon as Christ commands it. It is in this way that baptism, if not essential to your salvation, is essential to your obedience to Christ. If you have become His disciple, you are bound henceforth to obey all your Master’s commands, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”

III. Now, lastly, CONCERNING BEING SAVED, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

What is this being saved? Well, it means, of course, what everyone wants it to mean, *salvation from the punishment of sin*. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” His transgressions shall be forgiven him, his iniquity shall be blotted out, he shall not be brought into condemnation, but in the last great day he shall be justified in Christ. Nay, he is justified now, as the apostle says, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is certainly a part of this being saved.

It means, next, that he that believes and is baptized shall have *salvation from the dominion of his old nature*. When you believe in Christ, there shall suddenly spring up in you a new life, a new principle—a well shall be dug within your being and a fountain of living water shall begin to bubble up within you unto life everlasting. A miracle shall be wrought upon you—there shall come into your heart the Holy Ghost, who shall dwell there to re-create you, to set up within your soul a new throne whereon shall reign a new King. The old dominion of sin shall be broken as with a rod of iron and there shall be a new order of things within your heart, and righteousness shall begin to reign there by Jesus Christ.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” That is, he shall have *salvation from his old sins*. He shall no longer be the slave of drunkenness. He shall get the love of swearing by the throat. He shall have his lying, his anger, his passion under his feet. “He that believeth and is baptized” shall see all his old adversaries put to the rout and what he could not do, through the weakness of his flesh, shall be done for him by the power of the Spirit of God. And by divine grace he shall master his sins. He shall begin to live unto God, under new impulses, strengthened with a new power, and so he shall be delivered from his old sins.

Listen again, for this is wonderful. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”—he shall have *salvation from going back to his old sins*. If it were not for the final perseverance of the saints, I should think my Gospel a poor Gospel to preach, but he who truly believes in Christ shall have such a change wrought in him that the blessed work shall never be undone. My Lord shall light such a candle in your heart that the devil himself shall never be able to blow it out. Christ shall come to you with such power and authority, and set up His eternal throne in your soul with such divine majesty and might that you shall be His in time and throughout eternity.

We preach about no temporary salvation, no work of grace that by-and-by will grow feeble and lose its power, but we tell of a work of grace that shall enable you who believe to go on from strength to strength, from glory to glory, till every sin in you shall be driven out and you shall be made perfectly like your Lord. Then shall you behold His face in righteousness and be with Him forever and ever.

Once more, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”—he shall have *salvation from the age in which he lives*. “But” says one, “I do not want to be saved from that.” Do you not? “No.” But if you go with the age and go with the world, you will go down the Niagara which this age is just now shooting—down to the destruction to which this world is doomed. Cherish not the friendship of the world that slew your Lord, for the world and the works that are in it shall be burned up.

You remember how Peter said, on the day of Pentecost, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation”? That is what I want you to do tonight. “With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” A man who wishes to be a man, and who desires to be a saved man, has need take up arms against this evil age. He who would prove himself to be alive unto God must swim against the current of the times. Dead fish go down stream—can you not see them? I see the white bellies of the dead fish floating down by myriads, but the living fish goes up the stream, against the current, and finds his way to purer waters.

Beloved, he that believeth in Jesus Christ with all his heart shall be made to play the man where men are now so few—and to stand fast for God and truth where others yield to the Satanic power—and to be holy where ungodliness, like a mighty torrent, now sweeps down our streets. “He that believeth and is baptized” into the adorable name of Jesus, swears, as a Red Cross Knight, to follow Christ, and Christ alone—believing in Him though every man be a liar, and resolving for Him to live, for Him to die, and in Him to find hope here and eternal happiness hereafter. He is the man who shall be saved from this present evil age to the glory of God the Father.

All this great work is wrought by faith in Christ—that is the one way of salvation. “He that believeth on the Son has everlasting life.” Believe in Him, as men sometimes say, “up to the hilt.” Believe in His Manhood sympathizing with you. Believe in His Godhead able to help you. Believe in His blood cleansing you. Believe in His eternal life bringing everlasting life to you. God bless you, everyone, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 3:1-18

If you were called in to see a person who was dying and wished to read a chapter from the Word of God, and you were afraid that the sick one did not know the way of salvation, you could not select a better portion than the one we are about to read. I have chosen it in the hope that some may now learn from it what they must do to be saved.

Verses 1-2. *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night.*

Perhaps he was very busy during the day. It is better to come to Jesus at night than not to come to Him at all. All hours are convenient to Christ—you may come to Him when you are at home tonight. When everybody else is asleep, Jesus is still awake.

In all probability, however, Nicodemus did not wish to commit himself by coming to Christ by day. He had not yet tried and tested Him, so he would not be thought to be Christ’s follower till he had first had a quiet private talk with Him. As a ruler of the Jews, he was wise in acting thus discreetly.

2. *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.*

He admitted the truth as far as he could see it. The miracles of Christ proved Him to be a divinely-commissioned teacher. Always be willing to go as far as you can go in the pursuit of truth. If you cannot

see everything at once, see all that you can see. Be not of a caviling spirit—be frank and teachable as this man was.

3. *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.*

It is such a mystery, a thing of such a marvelous character, that his old nature cannot see it. He must have new eyes. He must be a new man, he must be born again before he can “see the kingdom of God.” Have you caught this idea, my dear hearer? Do you understand that you cannot polish yourself up to a certain point and then see the kingdom of God? You must be born again. There must be a radical change in you, a new birth, a birth from above, if you are even to see the kingdom of God.

4-5. *Nicodemus saith 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 into the kingdom of God.*

At first Jesus said that a man could not see the kingdom of God except he was born again. Now He tells Nicodemus that a man cannot enter the kingdom except he is born of water and of the Spirit. There must be a cleansing—he must be “born of water.” There must be a spiritual life—he must be “born of the Spirit,” or he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh;*

Nothing more. However godly your father, however gracious your mother, all that is “born of the flesh is flesh.”

6. *And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

There must be, then, a Spirit-birth, or else you have no spirit—you belong not to the spiritual realm—and you cannot see and you cannot enter the spiritual kingdom.

7-8. *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof,—*

The sounding of the wind blowing through the trees—

8. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth:*

Where it begins, whither it goes, or where it comes to an end, you cannot tell.

8. *So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.*

You do not know where the spirit-life begins and you cannot tell to what it will lead. There are heights to which the spirit-life can carry you, of which you have never dreamed—this is a mystery beyond your understanding.

9. *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?*

He did not deny that they might be, but he asked how they could be. Ah, many a man has asked the same question! “How may I be made anew? How may I become a new creature?” Only He that makes all things can make all things new. The new birth is as great a wonder as creation itself, and there is as much, and a great deal more, to be wrought upon you to make you a Christian as has been wrought upon you to make you a man.

10. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

These truths lie on the very doorstep of our holy religion. There are deeper and higher mysteries than these.

11-12. *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 have told you earthly things,*

Commonplace things, the lower things of faith. “If I have told you these”—

12. *And ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

There are mysteries in our holy religion which we would not tell to everybody. It would be casting pearls before swine to mention them to unregenerate men. Christ tells Nicodemus that the primary truths must be believed before the more advanced doctrines can be revealed.

13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

It is Christ who knows everything. He understands all mysteries. He can teach all truth, for He has been in heaven, He came down to earth, and He has gone back again to heaven.

Now, perhaps, some of you will be saying, “How are we to be saved? If there is no salvation without the new birth, how can we obtain the new birth?” Listen. The same chapter which tells you of the mystery of regeneration, tells you of the simple way of salvation by faith in Christ.

14-15. *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.*

“Whosoever.” If you believe in Christ, you are born again. If you trust Him, you have the new life. This simple way of salvation is not contradictory to the way of salvation by the new birth, it is the same thing stated in a form that we can comprehend.

16. *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.*

This text has saved thousands of souls. The constellation in the heavens, called the Great Bear, has in it the two pointers which direct the eye of the observer to the pole star—and this verse points to Christ so clearly, so distinctly, that many have found Him by it, and have lived. Let me read it again, “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.”

17-18. *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,—*

Not, “shall be condemned at the last,” though that also is true, but “He that believeth not is condemned already”—

18. *Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

May the Lord bless to us the reading of this very simple Gospel chapter, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—552, 540, 589

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