

TEXT SERMONS

SERIES: *THE RICHES OF SALVATION*

MESSAGE #17

“THE POSSESSION OF SALVATION” – Part 2**I Peter 1:23*****“Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever....”***

George Whitefield was an English evangelist who preached some in America in the late 1700's. He had come to faith in Christ when Charles Wesley, the Father of the Methodist denomination, gave him a book on the necessity of being born again. After Whitefield was born again, God called him to preach and he preached many times on Jesus' statement to Nicodemus in John 3:3 which was “you must be born again.”

After one of his messages on the new birth a woman asked Whitefield why he preached so much on the text, “you must be born again.” He replied, “Madam, because ‘you must be born again.’”!

The term “born again” has become pretty well-known in our culture. This doesn't mean that the average person necessarily understands it. However, there is no subject more important to the salvation of our souls. Some in both the pulpit and the pew refrain from using the term “born again” because, they say, it identifies them with the evangelical segment of Christianity, which they consider to be comprised of “Bible thumpers.” Let us never be ashamed of or apologetic for using biblical terminology!

There are two classifications of church members: those who have been born again and are therefore members of the true heavenly church, and those who have never been born again although members of an earthly church. One of the greatest tragedies in religion today is the fact that there are persons in every denomination who do not know the directions to get to heaven even though the Bible makes it so plain.

Illust. Billy Graham tells of a time early in his ministry when he arrived in a small town to preach at a church meeting. He had arrived a little early and sat on a sidewalk bench to finish writing a letter to the family back home. As he finished the letter, he asked a young boy standing on the sidewalk, where the post office was located.

When the boy had given him the directions, Mr. Graham thanked him and said, “If you will come to the church this evening, you can hear me tell everyone how to get to heaven.” The boy replied, “I don't think I will be there, mister. You don't even know your way to the post office, let alone how to get to heaven.”

Because most people do not know how to get to heaven, even if they wanted to go there, we need to make the information clear. Therefore, it is imperative that we communicate to them accurately what the scriptures mean when they speak about being born again, which is God's requirement for entering His heaven.

As we near the end of I Peter chapter one, which has as its theme the subject of our great and grand salvation, we have come to verse 23 wherein Peter writes that we have been “born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.”

In our previous message we dealt with two areas concerning the new birth: The Demand and the Details of the second birth. In this message we shall cover two additional areas: The Design and the Dignity of the new birth.

I. **THE DESIGN OF THE SECOND BIRTH.**

Let us look at what John, in his gospel, had to say about Jesus and the subject of the second birth. In John chapter one we read: “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:11-13)

The design of the second birth is clearly revealed here in these verses. Note that the second birth, the new birth, the born again experience is:

A. **Not By Ancestral Relationship.** “who were born, not of blood” - (John 1:13a).

That is, by natural descent. The spiritual birth is not the result of human blood relationship. It is not because our parents passed on to us spiritual life. My father and mother were Christians but they could not pass on to me God’s nature that God alone imparts. Furthermore, the new birth is,

B. **Not By Personal Resolution.** “nor of the will of the flesh” – (John 1:13b).

The new birth is not the result of self-reformation. It is not the result of breaking bad habits, or of “doing better”, or of being baptized or joining the church, etc. The Bible says, “It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” (Titus 3:5). Furthermore, the new birth is,

C. **Not By Social Rehabilitation.** “nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13c).

Other human beings cannot make us children of the Heavenly Father. Clubs, societies and groups, of which one is a member, cannot produce the essential new birth that changes us from the inside out. No amount of social, medical or psychological manipulation can bring about the new birth, can change us and give us God’s new nature.

Have you heard the strange story of Millard Wright? Millard Wright was a boy of 14 years of age when he committed his first burglary. For the next 28 years his life was a chronicle of crime: robberies, arrests, convictions, sentencing, imprisonments, paroles – over and over, again and again.

When he was 42 years old, after 28 years of crime, a dangerous surgical operation was proposed to him which the Social Agency of Pennsylvania assured him would

cure him of his criminal tendencies. It was a new procedure and they wanted to use him as an example of what psycho-surgery could do. He agreed to the procedure.

Psychiatrists, psychologists and physicians agreed that this was the solution to his life of crime. The team was assembled and they proceeded to cut out a section of Millard's brain that they had determined was causing his criminality. The delicate surgery was completed without causing blindness, paralysis or crippling him. It was pronounced a success and he would never have the tendency to commit crimes again.

But, within 6 years after the surgery, Millard Wright had confessed to more than 30 additional crimes and was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. But he did not live long – he hung himself in his cell and on his body was this suicide note: "I am sentencing myself to death for my evil misdeeds. I die in sincere sorrow for my sins."

There was another way for Millard Wright to be changed – God's way! II Cor. 5:17 says, "If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; all things are become new." The new birth gives us a new nature - God's nature – and our desires and delights are changed!

The essential, internal and eternal change takes place, not by ancestral relationship, not by personal resolution and not by social rehabilitation. It is by being born again. This is nothing short of spiritual regeneration.

D. By Spiritual Regeneration.

Notice the last phrase in John 1:13 "but of God." So if we are born again, it is because God willed it and put within us the willingness to believe, receive, confess, trust, and accept Jesus Christ as our Savior resulting in our spiritual birth! This, Romans 9:16 affirms in these words: "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. " And what a great change God has made in us! John Calvin said: "By the phrase 'born again' Jesus means, not the correction of one part, but the renovation of the whole of our nature."

Illust. I believe that one of the most simple and yet graphic analogies of this renovation, this new birth can be seen in comparing a caterpillar with a butterfly. The caterpillar is from beneath. It physically lives on the earth and is limited to it and bound by it. It cannot lift itself into the air no matter how hard it tries. It must go through a change, a metamorphosis and when it does it becomes a new creation, a butterfly! The butterfly soars above the earth and its troubles. It can choose to go back and crawl on the earth with the caterpillars, but this makes for a miserable existence for the superior butterfly.

No matter how hard the unbelieving sinner tries to get to heaven, he can't do it without Christ. He must become a new creature in Christ. Of course in order to become a butterfly, the caterpillar needed a transformation. Likewise, in order for a sinner to become a saint a transformation is needed – it is called "the new birth."

II. THE DIGNITY OF THE SECOND BIRTH.

“As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.” (Jn.1:12)

There are family names that, down through history, have been known for wealth, power and prestige. There are individuals who have been envious of those who were born with a “silver spoon in their mouths” and have lived in luxury, enjoying the status of royalty.

However, there is no family upon earth that has the status, the royalty and the dignity to compare with that of those who are children of God, having been born into God’s family, as the result of the new birth, the spiritual birth! Consider the dignity of the second birth as follows:

A. **We Have A Royal Father.** “children of God.” (John 1:12)

In his epistle, John makes it even more emphatic and dramatic in these words: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God....” (I John 3:1-2)

Illust. There are so many good gospel songs that are ignored today in favor of songs without substance. One of the songs that has substance and testimony is titled, “A Child Of The King” and contains these words:

“I once was an outcast stranger on earth,
A sinner by choice, and an alien by birth;
But I’ve been adopted, my name’s written down,
An heir to a mansion, a robe, and a crown.
I’m a child of the King, a child of the King:
With Jesus my Savior, I’m a child of the King.”

B. **We Are In A Royal Family.**

“You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” (Eph. 2:19)

From time to time and for hundreds of years, crowds have thronged to Buckingham Palace in London to await the announcement of an anticipated birth in the Royal Family. But every day, around this globe, there are new members added to God’s Royal Family! They are those who are born again through faith in Jesus Christ! Are you among them?

C. **We Have A Royal Fortune.**

“Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.” (Romans 8:16) What do we inherit? We are co-heirs with Jesus Christ - we have everything that He has. What does He have? If you are a member of God’s Royal family you will be happy to read the following: “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, *whom He has appointed heir of all things.*” (Heb.1:1-2)

We are in our Father's "will" and the day is coming when we will receive the royal fortune promised. In the meantime, what do you need? While yet on the earth we have the promise that: "God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil.4:19)

Illust. The television news carried a story titled, "Moonlighting Millionaire." It was about a man in Johannesburg, South Africa, who owns a large textile factory, drives a Rolls Royce, lives in a mansion and has a full staff of servants. He has a sixty foot yacht and yet every morning, five days a week, he goes to work as a policeman directing traffic. A millionaire moonlighting cop! When asked why he was working as a policeman, he said he "needed just a little more money."

Christian, you may not live in a mansion, drive a Rolls Royce, own a factory or have a staff of servants, here and now on the earth, however, we are the possessors of eternal treasures! With God Pay-Day may not be Friday but Pay-Day is coming! Just be patient and we will enjoy the riches of God in Christ Jesus throughout eternity!

"My Father is rich in houses and lands,
He holds the wealth of the world in His hands!
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,
His coffers are full, He has riches untold.
I'm a child of the King, a child of the King:
With Jesus my Savior, I'm a child of the King."

CONCLUSION

We have considered the Design and Dignity of the Second Birth. Have you experienced it? God wants to give you a new life in exchange for the old.

Illust. Do you remember the story of Aladdin's Lamp? The magic lamp which when rubbed would grant whatever Aladdin wished? Well, there was another character in the story, the Old Schemer who wanted to get his hands on Aladdin's Lamp. This old Arabian story tells how Aladdin became rich and married a beautiful Princess but she did not know the secret of the lamp. So when the Old Schemer came along calling out "new lamps for old!" she traded Aladdin's old lamp for a new lamp. That Old Schemer was a con artist for sure.

God is not a con artist! He is calling out "new lives for old!" That is the essence of the gospel. God does not patch up old lives; He gives totally new ones and this is the result of being born again. This is the way, the only way to possess salvation.

JdonJ