

Review

Last Sunday morning, we began our study of the first epistle of the apostle Peter. We saw that he was writing to Christians scattered all over the world.

1:3-5 Born Again

God has caused us to be born again. "Born again" is a term which has been greatly misunderstood ever since it was spoken for the first time. John's gospel describes to us that occasion.

A Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus one night. Jesus told him,

John 3:3-6 "...unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus *said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Just like many people today, Nicodemus didn't understand the phrase "born again."

To explain, all of us were born of water - birthed from the water of our mothers' womb. The second birth isn't physical, it's spiritual. If you are going to be born again, it won't be from your mother, but from the Holy Spirit.

The first birth makes you a child of your parents. The second birth means that you become a child of God. It's really that simple. "But how does this happen," people wonder. Jesus answered that as well, saying to Nicodemus,

John 3:7-8 "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

In other words, Jesus is saying, "Nicodemus, you don't have to see in order to receive and believe. You've never seen the wind, but you believe in it because you see its effects. The Spirit is much the same. You can't see Him, but you can see His effects - how He changes people."

When a person is born again, they become somebody totally new, somebody born of the Spirit into a whole new life. Paul said,

2Cor. 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Peter says that this second birth was only made possible by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The book of Romans tells us that Jesus was raised up in newness of life (Rom. 6:4-11) so that we could also have this brand new life.

Our Inheritance

One great thing about being born again is that you don't just get a new life on this earth. You also have an inheritance promised to you. It is a promise for your future.

Those of us who have been born again will inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14). This inheritance is eternal (Heb. 9:15) and is reserved in heaven for us (1Pet. 1:4). We know its waiting for us because the Holy Spirit has been...

Eph. 1:14 ...given as a pledge of our inheritance...

And that's our living hope - the hope of receiving this wonderful inheritance.

1:6-7 Trials For A Little While

We are to rejoice in the hope of our inheritance in heaven, even when we are going through trials on this earth. Trials will come and go, but our inheritance is eternal.

If nothing else, remember that all trials are temporary. They will eventually come to pass. Remember, they are only "for a little while" even if they last our entire lifetime! James said that our lives are just...

James 4:14 ...a vapor that appears for a little while and then

vanishes away.

In light of eternity, our lives are not long at all. That's why Paul encouraged us to have his attitude:

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Necessary Proof Of Faith

Not only are trials temporary, but they are also necessary. The distress they cause us gives us opportunity to put our faith to the test. They are proof of our faith. Will I give up and bail out on God because of difficulty? Or will I hang in there? This is where real faith is separated from imitation.

Peter's going to have lots more to say to us about trials in this letter.

1:8-9 Loving And Believing In The Invisible

When I was a teenager, I did not believe in God at all. I figured I'd never seen Him, so He didn't exist. Now, of course, I realize I was looking in the wrong place. John wrote in his gospel,

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

If you're waiting to catch a glimpse of God, it's not going to happen. God told Moses,

Ex. 33:20 ...“You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”

No one has seen God, but Jesus has explained Him. The word "explained" that John uses is the Greek word "ex-ayg-EH-om-ahee," from which we get our word "exegesis." Literally, it means "to show the way."

We haven't seen God appear before us and say, "Hey, here I am! Believe in Me! Love Me!" But Jesus has made God known to us. He has show us the way. And so by faith, we believe in God and and have love for God.

That's what faith is all about:

John 20:29 "...Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

Heb. 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

If you're waiting to see, you're never going to believe. But if you allow Jesus to explain, if you let Him show you the way, then you will believe. Remember,

Rom. 10:17 ...faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

By faith, we know that God is. By faith, we love God, although we've never seen Him. By faith, we can rejoice with inexpressible joy in the midst of great difficulties.