

The Internal Call: Absolutely Necessary for Salvation

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[0 : 00] Our study, which began in September, is Salvation God's Way.

! We actually started that back on September 10, 2018.! Day marks less than 11.

It doesn't sound like a lot of ground has been plowed, but you'll recall Diane was at MD Anderson and I was out a few Sundays and then the Christmas break and then my mother-in-law.

I am pleased to say that the introduction to our study is finally over. And this evening we're going to begin our message in chief on Salvation God's Way.

I want to begin by making what some may consider a startling statement, but I want to first add this qualifier to it.

[1 : 12] I certainly do not make this comment based upon any ability or knowledge I possess. It has nothing to do with me and everything to do with the Word of God.

But over the next several weeks we will be listening, I'll be talking, but that's a form of listening, to what I consider to be the most important Bible lessons we can ever hear.

I know that's bold, but again, it's because of the content and not the presenter. You may recall that we began last fall by looking at the Ordo Salutis, which is Latin for order of salvation.

Again, I want to read that to you. We started with decrees of God. Then we spoke about foreknowledge, predestination, election, God's choice of some to salvation.

Next comes the effectual call or regeneration or new birth. Then conversion, repentance and faith.

[2 : 22] Justification, a declaration of right standing before God. Adoption, placed in the family of God. Sanctification, progressive growth and holiness.

Perseverance, remaining in Christ. And glorification, receiving a resurrection body. Today, we are at a point of the effectual call.

We finished up before the Christmas break by looking at the external call, which is the proclamation of the gospel.

The external call is important. It has been ordained by God. But it is ineffectual to accomplish salvation. That takes the internal call, which we're going to begin to examine this evening.

And we're going to spend a number of weeks, because there's a number of facets to the internal call. Why would we so focus on the internal call?

[3 : 35] Because the internal call is absolutely necessary for salvation to occur. It's crucial.

It's critical. I cannot understate that fact. The internal call, think of it as the key that unlocks the door to salvation and to heaven.

And because of that, we're going to look at it in detail. Without the internal call, men are hopelessly lost and bound for hell.

With the internal call, men are eternally saved and bound for heaven. Now, the internal call goes by other names with which we are or should be familiar.

It is referred to as the effectual call, the efficacious call, regeneration, and the new birth.

[4 : 37] And we can take that phrase, the new birth, and we can break that down further, because that is referred to as being born again or born from above.

And all of these terms, internal call, effectual call, efficacious call, regeneration, new birth, being born again and being born from above, can be used interchangeably.

They all refer to the same act by which men and women are saved. Now, with that brief introduction, we're going to begin.

And our beginning point, as I already mentioned, is the absolute necessity of regeneration, the new birth. It is necessary.

God, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, did great miracles. Creation being spoken into existence was a great miracle.

[5 : 46] During the incarnation, when God was on earth in the person of Christ, He did great miracles. Jesus turned water into wine. Jesus made eyes out of mud using only dirt and spit.

Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead. I mean, you think about that. He brought a man who had been dead four days back to life.

But all of this pales in the presence of the miracle of the new birth. By it, the Lord transforms individuals that are dead in trespasses and sins into saints of God.

He fits them for the kingdom of God. In the new birth, Jesus gives men and women steeped in sin eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts by which to believe.

And the greatest evidence of the power of God is regeneration by which He saves a soul forever. However, as I was working on this lesson today and thinking of the evidence of God's power, a passage came to my mind, and it's actually found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

[7 : 08] I'm going to read the Mark passage in chapter 2. It's in verse 1.

And when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him.

And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.

And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven. Well, that's rather bold, wouldn't you say?

Now, some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts. They were thinking inside. Why does this man speak like that?

He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? And immediately Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, Why do you question these things in your hearts?

[8 : 40] Which is easier to say to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven? Or to say, Rise, take up your bed, and walk.

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, He said to the paralytic, I say to you, Rise, pick up your bed, and go home.

And He rose, and immediately picked up His bed, and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this.

That's quite a passage. So what is the answer to the Lord's question? Is it easier to say, Your sins are forgiven, or to say to a paralytic, and capable of walking, Rise and walk.

It is much easier to say to a paralytic, Rise and walk, and have him do so, than it is to say, Your sins are forgiven, and they actually are forgiven.

[9 : 47] Much more difficult. Why? Because for Jesus to say, Your sins are forgiven, took His sacrificial death on the cross.

He had to die, for that man's sins to be forgiven. For our sins to be forgiven. It takes that same death, to accomplish our new birth.

In the new birth, we see the power of God, put on display. And we're going to be looking, at a great many passages of Scripture, over the next several weeks.

But none more thoroughly, or more importantly, than those found in the beginning words, beginning verses, of the third chapter of John.

Listen attentively, to these inspired words, being spoken, by the King of the universe, who is incapable of lying, by the way.

[10 : 52] Starting in John 3, verse 1. Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

This man came to Jesus by night, and said to Him, For no one can do these signs, that you do, unless God is with him.

Jesus answered him. I think I left out some words there, didn't I? What was it? Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher, come from God, for no one...

Yeah, I think I realized that, when I got to it. Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Men, that is absolutely staggering. And this passage captures, the amazing facts of the new birth.

[11 : 55] The new birth, or regeneration, is the life of God, and the soul of a man. We live our lives on planet earth, which is a massive, desolate graveyard.

This planet's a graveyard. We live on this planet, and people, most people are walking around dead, and they don't know it.

Yet God can take people, where there is no spiritual life at all, and implant not only life, but his life within them.

And again, I say, this is absolutely staggering. In a moment in time, we go from spiritual death, to spiritual life.

In every sense of the word, that is a resurrection. That's a resurrection. Every believer, is a Lazarus, having been raised, from death.

[13:03] We are raised, from being dead, in trespasses and sins, and then made alive, in the Lord Jesus. Dr. Louis Berkhoff, great theologian, lived 1873 to 1957, had this to say, about the new birth.

Regeneration is that act of God, by which, the principle of new life, is implanted in man, and the governing disposition, of the soul, is made holy.

Now we are talking about, a transformation of the soul, and it begins inside of a man, and then manifests itself, on the outside.

Here is how the late, Dr. R.C. Sproul, describes it. Regeneration, is the act of God alone, in which he removes, the human heart, making it alive, when it was dead.

In regeneration, God acts at the origin, and deepest point, of the human person. It is the immediate, supernatural work, of the Holy Spirit, wrought in us.

[14:15] It is the effect, and the fact is to, quicken us to, spiritual life, from spiritual death. It changes, the disposition, of our souls, inclining our heart, to God.

It is utterly amazing, what the Lord accomplishes, through the new birth, or regeneration. And I believe, Dr. Sproul is absolutely correct. No greater act, can occur in the human heart, than to be born again.

Now we're talking about, the necessity, of every human, needing, to be born again, in order to enter, into the kingdom, of God.

And you might hear me say, kingdom of heaven, those are interchangeable, in our study. Strictly from the human, viewpoint, if anyone, did not need to be born again, but could enter, the kingdom of heaven, directly, Nicodemus, would have been near, or at the top, of that human devised list. He'd be on the list, if that were possible. By outward appearances, Nicodemus, had everything going for him, as it pertained, to a relationship, with God.

[15:36] And I will guarantee you, there were people, in that culture, they all knew, who Nicodemus was, at least in Jerusalem. When they saw him, walking, that's Nicodemus. Boy, look at there, that's the great teacher, of Israel.

They all knew, who he was. And I am certain, there were many, in that culture, who wished, they could be like Nicodemus. So let's take a look, at this man. We learn, in verse 1, of chapter 3, that Nicodemus, was a Pharisee.

As a Pharisee, he had, separated himself, from the common man, which he would have viewed, as a sinner, with no hope, of being righteous, before God.

The Pharisees, were so strict, they separated, themselves, from fellow Jews, who were also, serving, in other capacities, serving God.

And they, they were separate, from them. In their day, the Pharisees, were the conservative, orthodox, Bible believers. They were the fundamentalists, of their day.

[16:47] And they were steeped, in traditions. And they observed, the Old Testament law, rigidly. They were devout.

They were disciplined. They not only, memorized scripture, they memorized the Torah, they memorized, the other Jewish writings. Hebrews. When Jesus, was on earth, there were about, 6,000 Pharisees, on earth, serving God.

If anyone, in that culture, had been set apart, to pursue, a godly mission, on earth, it was Nicodemus. The passage, also tells us, that Nicodemus, was a ruler, of the Jews.

Very important concept. That means, he's a member, of the Sanhedrin. Out of, 6,000 Pharisees, there was only, a small number, that were members, of the Sanhedrin.

He was a member, of the spiritually elite, in Israel. And as I've taught before, the Sanhedrin, was the Senate, the Supreme Court, and the Presidency, all rolled into one body.

[18:00] Including the high priest, there were 71 members, of this ruling body. As rulers, of the Jews, Nicodemus, was looked up to, by members, of the nations.

6,000 Pharisees, and only a handful, made it to the Sanhedrin. And people, would have been, very impressed, by how carefully, and rigorously, Nicodemus, observed, the most minute, parts of the Mosaic Law.

He would have been, rigid, in that. In addition, to all this, we learn, when we get to verse 10, which won't be tonight, that Nicodemus, was the teacher, of Israel.

Now please note, I did not say, he was a teacher. The scriptures say, and by the way, there are plenty of teachers, in Israel. The scriptures say, and Jesus said, he is, the teacher.

The Bible, for him, of course, was the Old Testament, and he knew it, inside out, from front, to back. I'd like to say, chapter and verse, but those didn't even come in, until, centuries after Christ, was on earth.

[19 : 21] If you had a question, about the word of God, which was the Old Testament, go to Nicodemus. He basically, has it memorized. He would have the answer.

In that day, Nicodemus, was a walking Bible. And people knew it. And they'd point him out. There goes Nicodemus. They might even whisper it, so as not to disturb him.

Nicodemus, had everything going for him. Everything. In fact, he was lacking, in only one thing. The only thing he lacked, was the fact, that he was lost, and on his way to hell.

Other than that, he had everything going for him. He needed, to be born again. He was like millions, and billions, on this earth, even at this moment.

Religious, but lost. A lot of that on earth. Name the earth's religions. Religious, but lost.

[20 : 30] The truth is, that a man, can have the Bible in his head, but not Christ in his heart. I heard Billy Graham, in person once say, that he never gave, a major crusade, crusade, in a large city, where at least one pastor, had gotten saved.

There was always at least one pastor, that came forward, and said, I'm not saved. Amazing.

Sometimes, Dr. Graham said, there were many. Religious people, and I'm sure, that our pastors here, agree with this, and others of you.

Religious people, are the most difficult, to share the gospel with. They don't see, the need. They're already religious, and they don't see the need, for the new birth.

That is where Nicodemus, that supremely religious, and lost. I once, was sharing the gospel, with one of our, well, he became governor, of Oklahoma.

He was a U.S. attorney, and Roman Catholic, and his mother, had just died. And I was sharing with him, and he's thinking, of his mother, and he said, wait a minute.

[21 : 48] My mother, worked tirelessly, for the, for the Catholic church, and for the Catholic league, and all this. Are you telling me, she didn't earn her way, to heaven?

I said, yeah, that's what I'm telling you. He got, he got incensed. I remember, we had our conversation, cut short. Even more startling, was I saw this on television, years ago.

Remember the name, Bill Moyer? Pastor, you probably don't, you probably don't, you're too young. Southwestern graduate, moderate liberal, strain, more into media, than ministry.

But he was moderating, a discussion, between Paige Patterson, and, and, a British pastor, who was extremely, liberal.

Very, very liberal. And they came around, to a discussion, of Mother Teresa. And I believe, she had just died. And, they were talking about, the great stuff, she had done in India, and everything.

[22 : 55] And, this, British pastor said, well, she certainly earned her, place in heaven. Well, you're not going to say that to Paige, and, and get away with it.

And, Paige says, no she didn't. He said, what? He said, no she didn't. He said, she's incapable of that. He said, look, I'm not, I'm not saying, Mother Teresa isn't in heaven.

But, I'm saying, if she's there, she's there, because she was born again, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and, and, had faith in the finished work, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, you know, he went on and on. And then, Bill Moyers took up, he said, you're telling me that, not even Mother Teresa, could earn her way? And, he said, Bill, that's exactly what I'm telling you.

Did you sleep through that class, at Southwestern? That's exactly what I'm telling you. I'm telling you. They were, what's the word I'm looking for? Dumbfounded.

[24 : 01] Speechless. What was it? Flabbergasted. Flabbergasted? Is askance a word, Mike? I don't know. They couldn't believe what Page was saying.

Well, he's right. He's exactly right. He's exactly right. Well, here we have Nicodemus, supremely religious, and lost, and lost.

Now, the opening words of John, chapter 3, also tells us that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. A lot been written about that.

All kinds of speculation as to why he came at night. In our day, I think the majority opinion is that he probably did so, because as a member of the Sanhedrin, as a Pharisee, as a teacher, it would have been politically incorrect for him to be seen with Jesus and his band of followers.

And so, under the cover of darkness, he came to Jesus. Now, that's the majority opinion. I have mixed emotions about it. I'm being very honest with you.

[25 : 23] They may be right. I'll admit that. But maybe there are alternatives. I mean, one thing we know for certain, he came to him, whether at night or day, he came, and anybody that saw him knew who he was.

Maybe his duties only freed him to come at night. But regardless, he came. And I'm willing to cave in, if people can show me that, no, it was politically incorrect, so he didn't want to risk anything. Maybe that's why. And in his own heart, he thought that he was paying Jesus great respect when he said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God.

I mean, Nicodemus thought this greeting, this is the zenith. He's showing great honor to Jesus. Here was the teacher of Israel telling Jesus, we know you're a teacher that God has sent down here to us.

You couldn't be doing these things if God hadn't sent you down here. Well, let me tell you guys, nothing could be more erroneous. Nothing could be more erroneous.

[26 : 50] Jesus was not a teacher come from God. Jesus was God come to teach. He's God in human flesh, and he came down here to teach us.

There's a difference. There's a difference. It's like these guys that say, well, you know, I don't believe he's the son of God, but I do believe he's a good man. That's not an option. He came and said, he's the only way to eternal life.

If that's not true, he couldn't be a good man, could he? He'd be a deceiver or a lunatic. That's what Josh McDowell said, not me.

I talked to Josh about that one time. But it's true. He's good because he's God. That's why Jesus is good. Jesus was God come down to teach us.

Now remember, Nicodemus is standing before the Lord, is still spiritually blind. He cannot see or understand who Jesus claimed to be.

[27 : 59] So Jesus provides an earth-shattering answer to Nicodemus. And you know what's so amazing? Nicodemus hasn't even asked a question yet.

The Lord is going to answer the question that Nicodemus is going to ask. That's pretty neat. How could he do that? Well, he's omniscient. He's the omniscient God who knows everything and was able to read Nicodemus like a book.

You realize Jesus knows everything about us? That doesn't always bring me comfort. I'm sure it says most of you, but not me. But he does.

He knows everything about us. He can read Nicodemus like a book. He is able to do that with all of us. Even down to our subconscious. So what was the question burning a hole in the heart of Nicodemus?

Well, I don't know. We're not told. But I don't think it's difficult to figure out. I think that Nicodemus' question in his own heart, which Jesus would have understood, was like that of the rich young ruler who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life.

[29 : 21] I really think that's where Nicodemus was headed. And that may be the reason he came at night. He didn't want his brothers in the Sanhedrin to hear him ask that. None of them would ask that.

And Jesus, knowing this is the question, provides the answer. He starts out and says, Truly, truly, I say to you. So let's note first that Jesus begins with truly, truly.

You need to use that more in the poll. Truly, truly. What he is about to say is of utmost importance. All that Jesus said was important.

But some things, he said, rise to the zenith of importance. This is marked out by the use of truly, truly. In our language, he could have said, This is true. This is true.

We really need to grasp what Jesus is saying to Nicodemus. This is ultimate truth.

[30 : 28] This is life-changing truth. This is truth for us. Our eternal destiny depends upon a proper understanding of the words that Jesus is about to reveal to Nicodemus.

Come forward 2,000 years. This is for us right now in 2019 in this classroom. So here is the Lord's answer to the unasked question.

Truly, truly, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. There it is.

There it is. In all its depth, in all its importance, in all its significance, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Not even talk about entering. Can't even see it. I mean, that's the first step. You've got to see it, then go in, right? Can't even see it.

[31 : 41] And I think by now, we all understand the difference between can and may. Some of you may have heard this in grade school. Teacher, can I sharpen my pencil? Yes, you probably can, but the question you need to ask is, may I sharpen my pencil?

Any of y'all ever hear that? Jack, if you haven't heard it, you will someday. The word may, or may I, is a word of permission.

A word of permission. The word can is a word of ability. With this in mind, it becomes clear what the Lord Jesus was saying to Nicodemus and through him to all of us.

None of us are left out of this. Nicodemus, Tom, Mike, Lee, you have no ability within yourself to even see the kingdom of God, much less to enter into that kingdom.

It is an absolute necessity for you to enter the kingdom of God and to do so, you must be born again. That's what Jesus is saying to him. Nicodemus, you're the great teacher, great Jew, remember the saying, you can't even see it, much less enter in unless you are born again.

[33 : 08] Nicodemus, it doesn't matter how religious you are. It doesn't matter how many verses of the Bible you have memorized. It doesn't matter if your parents were believers.

It doesn't matter how much money you have given and how many good deeds you have performed. Unless you are born again, you won't even see the kingdom of God, much less enter into it.

It's amazing. Without the new birth, which we're going to be talking about for a while, you cannot comprehend who Jesus is in fullness.

It takes a new birth to do that. You cannot comprehend what He accomplished during the incarnation. It takes a new birth. It takes a new heart, a new mind, a new spirit within you.

You must have spiritual discernment to see the kingdom of heaven and that takes rebirth. You see why I started out saying how important this is? You understand that?

[34 : 20] Only through the new birth can you see and comprehend who Christ is and what He has accomplished. through the new birth you come face to face with the fact that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

And if you're going to have any depth of understanding that, it takes the new birth. It takes regeneration to see that. Grace alone, faith alone, by Christ alone.

Nicodemus had to be absolutely startled when he heard this from Jesus. Maybe when you first heard it, you were startled.

I worked with a number of FDIGents. One of them was a Catholic boy and a good guy. And he said, what does this mean being born again?

And I was pretty new to the faith and I tried to describe it to him. I don't know how good a job I did. But I did say one thing. Even the Catholic Bible says you must be born again.

[35 : 34] Because I went to the library and looked it up. They have a Catholic Bible then or did. Only through the new birth. He's startled.

And he's the great teacher of Israel. He's a Pharisee. He's a member of the Sanhedrin. No one had ever spoken to Nicodemus in this manner.

I mean, you wouldn't walk up in the middle of the afternoon and he's walking down the street going into the drugstore and say, hey Nicodemus, I want to tell you something. I've been thinking about you.

You must be born again. He'd say, get away from me. But he sought out Jesus right after Jesus had done a miracle I might add. No one had spoken to him like this.

He can't believe what Jesus just told him. To say that Nicodemus is flabbergasted I think probably is an understatement. And really, in one sense, to Nicodemus, Jesus has given an unintelligible statement.

[36 : 45] But in truth, Jesus has Nicodemus right where he wants him. He's got him. Listen to how he responds to Jesus in verse 4.

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. And then he adds, can he?

In the form of a question. You can't go back into your mother's womb. Jesus has Nicodemus right where he wants him. And the Lord immediately follows up with this statement.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

John 3, 5. John 3, 5. You must be born of water and the Spirit, capital S, in order to enter the kingdom of God.

[37 : 52] Now, I had two choices. I could continue on explaining that verse for another 20 minutes or we can end here and we're going to pick it up there next time.

And I opted to do that because we've been doing this for 40 minutes. So rather than go another 20, we're going to end up here with this lesson and we will pick that up next time.

I'm excited about this. I hope you all are. This is going to be involved. I wish I'd had this 30 years ago, quite honestly. I hope you all are.

I hope you all are.