

The Gospel: What We Need

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 November 2017

Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

- [0 : 0 0] Well, good morning again and welcome to Faith. We're so glad that you are here with us together today, and we are going to be going back to the basics today.
- It reminds me of the famous Vince Lombardi when speaking to his team about wanting them to reach the goal that they had, that they wanted. And as he was standing before his team, he held out a football in his hand.
- And he says, gentlemen, this is a football. That's how basic he was going to get. And that's where we're coming today. We've been in this series about the gospel, and the most important question that we could ever ask ourselves, and the most important question that we could ever deal with in our entire life is, what is the gospel?
- How do we appropriate it into our lives? How do we know that we're a part of God's family? How does it become a reality in our lives? Not only for ourselves, but for those that we come into contact with each and every day.
- So we're going to go back to the basics, talk about the gospel, what it is that we need, what is our part, and what is God's part. And as we're doing that, I would like for us to turn to the gospel of John, chapter 3, and we will be looking at a discourse, a conversation between Jesus and a very religious fellow.
- [1 : 3 2] And I want you to listen to Jesus speaking. For some of you, you've heard this passage many, many, many times before. Listen to it as if it's the first time that you're listening to it.
- For some of you, it may be the first time that you hear these words of Jesus. John, chapter 3, the gospel of John, chapter 3, beginning with verse number 1.
- 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, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs, these are the miracles that Jesus was performing, that you do unless God is with him.
- Jesus answered and said to him, Most assuredly, I say to you, 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? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered and said, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.
- [2 : 4 6] That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.
- The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.
- Nicodemus answered and said to him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said to him, Are you a teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things?
- Most assuredly, I say to you, we speak what we know and testify what we have seen, and you do not receive our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

No one who has ascended to heaven, but he who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

[3 : 59] And this next verse, for many of you will be very, very familiar. John 3, verse 16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

But it doesn't stop there. It goes on. Verse 17, For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

He who believes in him is not condemned. But he who does not believe, Jesus said, is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God. Father, this morning I ask that you would use your word this morning to penetrate our hearts and our minds, and I pray that you would help us to see truth and to understand what Jesus is talking about and what it takes from us to be right with you and what is necessary for us to become a part of your family and to enjoy a relationship with you, a brand new life, sins forgiven, and a new life that is more and more like Jesus each and every day.

[5 : 40] We pray that if there's anyone here this morning or anyone here listening to this audio this morning or today that does not know Jesus as their Savior, I pray, Lord, that you would open their minds and help them to believe and trust in Jesus.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You must be born again. What in the world does that mean? That's a term that has been bandied about for a number of years.

As a matter of fact, it's grown. It's been used so much, overused, and sometimes to the point of it loses its meaning when people misuse it, and sometimes people even make fun of it.

Oh, you're a born-again Christian. What does that mean? Well, these are the words of Jesus. So we need to understand what these words mean. And I believe there are a lot of people that don't know what Jesus is talking about when he's talking about being born again.

Last week we talked about salvation. We talked about what we... It's not about what we do so much as about what God has already done and what he's doing in our lives.

[6 : 50] And I know there's a part that we play. We're going to get to that a little bit later. But I want us to understand that God is the main actor in salvation. God is the main player.

He's the one that thought it up. He's the one that made it possible for us to be reconciled back with him, for us to be able to have that relationship. He's the one that has to draw us.

He comes seeking after us. And we have that part, which is believing and trusting in him. And we see God's grace. We see the grace of God, unmerited favor, permeate the gospel all throughout.

And I want us to think about John chapter 3 and this discussion that Jesus had with Nicodemus in four different ways. And as we've said the last few weeks, salvation is not about praying a prayer.

Matter of fact, you don't have to pray a prayer to be saved. You don't have to check a box to be saved. You don't have to walk down an aisle and shake the preacher's hand and sign the card to be saved.

[7 : 53] We're going to look at salvation today, this morning, in four different ways, not necessarily sequential. But these are things that God does. And these are things that God provides to us.

So if you want to have a relationship with God, we need to understand this conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus. So number one, if you're taking notes, the first thing is, God needs to reveal something to us before we can come to that point where we know that we have a need.

So the first thing God does is, he reveals our need. And that's exactly what Jesus did to Nicodemus, this very religious guy who comes to him at night, possibly because he didn't want to be seen by his fellow religious folks, his fellow Pharisees, that he came to Jesus.

But Jesus has to reveal his need. And this is the main thing that he does. But you have to understand, Nicodemus was a Pharisee, which means he was of the ruling class of the Jews.

He was one who had, from the time he was a young boy, probably about 13, he had studied the law of God. He had studied the Old Testament. He had memorized much of the Old Testament.

[9 : 12] And he was actually, his job was to lead other people to know how to get to heaven and to be part of God's family, part of God's chosen people.

He was a very well-respected man. He was a devout man, to say the least. And so he has spent his entire life learning about God, learning about the kingdom of God, and teaching others about how to be part of and how to enter the kingdom of God.

Notice what Jesus says to him. Verse number three, John chapter three, Jesus answered and said to him, most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Now, it's what he spent his whole life doing. And I want you to notice the gravity of the situation. Jesus basically says to Nicodemus, you have no spiritual life in you whatsoever.

Here is this religious man who spent his entire life studying God's word, praying to God every day, multiple times a day, teaching others how to be part of God's kingdom.

[10 : 31] And Jesus, face to face with him, says, you have no spiritual life in you whatsoever. In effect, he's saying, Nicodemus, your religion's worthless.

Wow, what a kick in the face. Like, what's the point then, Jesus? And I can imagine the wheels turning in Nicodemus' mind when Jesus says, it's not about what you think.

Remember, he was trying to keep the law. He was trying to keep the law in order to be right with God. So the first thing that Jesus, as he's showing him his need, I think what he's showing him is the new birth is necessary to know God.

Second part of your notes. The new birth, this is the first point, under God reveals our need. The new birth, being born again, it's necessary to know God.

So it's not optional. If you notice in John 3, verse 3, Jesus said, unless one is born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

[11 : 38] We can't know God apart from the new birth. Then you get midway to verse number 7, and he says, as if he wasn't clear enough in verse 3, he says in verse 7, you, what's that word?

Must. If you're looking at your Bibles, verse 7, you must be born again. It's not an option. It's the only way. So the new birth is necessary to know God.

So as we're thinking about today, how do I know God? How do I be part of God's family? Well, you must be born again. We say, Pastor, I don't know what that means. We haven't gotten there yet. So Jesus, first of all, has to let us know.

You have a need. You're lost without Jesus. So we have to understand the new birth is necessary. But secondly, one of the things that many people do not understand is that the new birth is impossible without God.

It is impossible without God. Notice in verse 4 in your Bibles, Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old?

[12 : 49] I thought I went through this already. Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? And we find out that's not at all what Jesus is talking about.

He's not talking about a physical birth where you are birthed again into humanity because it's impossible to give yourself spiritual birth.

Would you agree? How many of you, before you were born, up somewhere in the eternity past somewhere decided, you know what?

I think I'm going to be born. I'm going to go down to earth and I'm going to come into earth and I'm going to be slapped by this doctor or I'm going to be, I'm going to cry and then I'm, I'm going to be a human being.

None of us ever did that because it's not possible. And the whole idea of being born again, what Jesus is talking about, literally means being born from above.

[13 : 49] It's not something that we can conjure up. It's not something that we can will into existence. We have to be born from above. So it's impossible without God.

Do you remember when Jesus was talking to the rich young ruler and he gave, gave him something to do? How do I get, how do I get into heaven? Pretty much was the question. Jesus told him what he needed to do and it seemed to him impossible.

Remember what Jesus told him? He said, with man, it is not possible. But with God, all things are possible.

So it's impossible without God, but to be right with God, with God, is possible. The problem is not with God. The problem is with us. We can't be good enough to be part of God's family.

We cannot earn our way to be part of God's family. No matter what your pedigree is, no matter how good you think you are, no matter how moral we are or even think we are, we cannot be good enough.

[14 : 52] So how does the Bible describe us? Remember I said, we first, Jesus was telling Nicodemus, first of all, you have to realize you have a need because what do most people, where are most people today?

You know what? I'm okay. I'm good. You ask someone, they'll say, well, you know what? I'm trying to live by the Ten Commandments and I think I'm doing pretty well because I'm not as bad as some of them church folks because you know they're all hypocrites, right?

And so they'll judge themselves. The problem is we judge ourselves against the worst. Well, I'm better than so-and-so. But when we try to judge ourselves against God, that's when the problem comes in because we can't be good enough.

So what does the Bible tell us about ourselves? Now we're going to run through these very, very quickly. Since we don't, our projector lamp is out so we don't have our projector up so we don't have our notes up here and the Bible up here.

I'm going to be going through these very quickly so don't bother trying to follow me along. You can write down these passages if you would like to look at them and research them a little bit more.

[16 : 04] As a matter of fact, I encourage you to do that when you get home. So we're going to run through a list very quickly about what the Bible says about us. And I'm going to warn you in advance.

The news ain't good. All right. First of all, the Bible says we are morally evil. We are morally evil.

Not just sinful, but evil. Genesis 8, verse 21. Now how about that for starting at the beginning?

Genesis 8. And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma and the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.

That's why we don't have to teach our children how to do bad things. It comes naturally. And so God says every thought, every imagination that a human being can come up with from his youth is evil.

[17:07] These are from God's words. Nor again will I destroy every living thing as I have done. Now let's go to the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke 11, 13.

Luke 11, 13. If then, if you then, Jesus is speaking to the crowd, if you then being evil, before Jesus, God says, we're evil.

If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? So, we're morally evil. That's pretty bad.

So, when we think about, well, can I be good enough to get to heaven? I don't know. God said we're evil. Let's go on. We're spiritually sick is the next thing the Bible teaches us.

We are spiritually sick. Matthew 9, verse number 12. Matthew 9, 12. Jesus has been in the boat. Jesus got out. He sees Matthew, who was a tax collector, who was a very crooked guy.

[18:09] He was working for Rome, and he was riding on the, making his living off the back of his fellow Jewish people. And, basically, Rome said, this is how much tax we need, and you're going to get your salary by how much you can extort out of the Jews.

So, you know, let's say, tax rate, 10 point, what is it, 10.75% here in Calcutt you perish? Awfully high. And, he goes to the people and says, okay, pay your tax.

Well, how much is the tax rate? Tax rate is 15%. And so, he was collecting extra money. So, they didn't like him. And so, the Pharisees see that Jesus has asked Matthew to go to Matthew's house.

And they see Jesus eating with a bunch of sinners. And they said, what in the world is this supposedly righteous man, this teacher, religious teacher, doing, eating with sinners?

Verse 12, when Jesus heard that, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. So, we are spiritually sick.

[19:18] We're morally evil, spiritually sick. And the Bible also says, we're slaves to sin. We are slaves to sin. John 8, 34, Jesus answered them, most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave to sin.

So, the question is, have you ever sinned? Every hand should go up. So, what does that mean if you've ever sinned? Jesus just said, you are a slave to sin.

We also see in 2 Timothy 2, 26, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

So, we're slaves. We've been taken captive by Satan, so to speak, and to do his will. So, we are slaves to sin. And here, as we see this next one, this is what keeps so many people from realizing their need, and it's that we are blinded to truth.

Apart from Jesus Christ, before we come to know Jesus as Savior, the Bible says we are blinded to truth. That's why you try to explain someone what it means about trusting Jesus, and they look at you like you're crazy, and they say, yeah, I've done that, and you know for sure they have it, because their life is not showing it, because we're blinded to truth.

[20 : 43] 1 Corinthians 2.14, but the natural man, that person who does not have the Holy Spirit within them, that person who has not been born again, or born from above, does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them, because the things of God are spiritually discerned, or spiritually understood.

We also look at 2 Corinthians 4.4, whose minds, whose minds, the people, we are, our minds, before we come to know Christ as our Savior, whose minds, the God of this age, lower g, little g, meaning Satan, whose minds, the God of this age, has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

And then when you look at Ephesians 4, it says that we have hearts of stone. Think about that. Hearts of stone, apart from Christ. We are not receptive to truth.

We are blinded to it, apart from Christ. And next, we read about that just a moment ago. We are lovers of darkness. We are lovers of darkness.

Ephesians 5, 8, For you were once darkness, is what the Apostle Paul says to the believers, those who believe in Christ, but now you are light in the world.

[22 : 14] Walk as children of light. And this next one, John chapter 3, that we just read a moment ago, verse 20, Jesus says, For everyone practicing evil.

Now, who's evil? Everyone, apart from Christ, before we come to know Christ, says we are evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his or her deeds should be exposed.

So on our own, we love darkness. We don't want people, we don't want God to really know when we think about it because, have you ever done anything that you're ashamed of?

I mean, at the least embarrassed. We go to great lengths to hide those things from people, do we not? We don't want those things to come to the light of day.

But what happens when someone exposes, and that's what light does, light exposes things out of the dark, in the darkness, darkness. And so, we do everything we can not to have our deeds exposed because it will cause us regret, cause us embarrassment, cause us even more and more guilt.

[23 : 31] And so, that's why Jesus says, you who practice evil, he says, you're in darkness. And men, women, boys, girls, apart from Christ, love darkness rather than light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

And we run from the light. And also, Ephesians tells us that we are children of wrath. We are children of wrath.

James chapter 4, verse 4, adulterers and adulteresses. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

an enemy of God. Romans 5, 10, for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, which, or excuse me, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

The Bible says we're enemies of God. But you might say, well, I've loved God all my life. No, you haven't. Well, pastor, how can you say that? I've loved God all my life.

[24 : 39] No, you haven't. Because the Bible says there is none that seeks after God. No, not one. Now, you may have loved a God of your own making in your mind, a God who looks the other way on sin, a God who won't punish you, a God who...

So the reality is when people say, I love God and they've never trusted Christ as their Savior, what they're really saying is, you know what, I've made up a God in my own image, and that's the God that I love.

But when we come face to face with a God that is a God of justice, and as the Bible said, a terrible God doesn't mean he's bad, but it means, apart from Christ, he's pretty scary because he is so just and righteous, and he's so awesome and mighty in power.

That's why when people, Old Testament and New Testament, saw an angel, their first response was, you know, not this female form with fluffy white wings.

They were stricken with terror every time they saw an angel. Why? Because of the beauty and the majesty. Just imagine God. And so, no one seeks after God, no, not one.

[25 : 56] And it's a pretty difficult list. Well, it gets worse. The Bible says we're also spiritually dead. Apart from Christ, we are spiritually dead.

We are under the sentence of physical death and spiritual death because the moment Adam chose to eat that fruit in the Garden of Eden that God had said, you shall not eat of that tree.

He says, because the moment you eat of that tree, you will surely die. Begin to die physically, and at that moment, die spiritually, be separated from God. And so, we're spiritually dead.

Romans 5.12, spiritual death. Ephesians 5.14, an eternal death. Romans 6.23, Ephesians 2.1. Ephesians 2.1 says, and you, and he made alive, and you he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sin.

So, this is the portrait before us. A pretty bad list. So, Jesus is saying to Nicodemus, bud, you got no chance. On your own and in your religion, you have no chance.

[27 : 06] Unless you understand the purpose of the law, and unless you understand why I gave it, that is to point to you that you cannot be good enough to get to heaven, and I am the completion of the law, and unless you are looking to your Messiah, Jesus would be saying, which is me, Jesus the Messiah, he says you have no chance.

Jesus says it's not like that. It's not a prayer that you can pray to check off a box. It's not going through this ritual, that routine, going through that rite in whatever religion.

That's the whole point of what Jesus is saying in John chapter 3. So, now, and you might be saying, well, that's frustrating. Well, how can I know?

I mean, if I did steps 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and I got the preacher's approval, then that would be easy. Well, okay, now you're getting to the heart of the gospel.

It's not just checking off a box or praying a prayer. Now, part of it is talking to God. Prayer is simply talking to God. But you can pray a prayer and not meet it in your heart.

[28 : 19] So that's the whole point of understanding that just because you pray a prayer doesn't mean that you are born again and you are part of God's family. So what does it mean to be born again?

First of all, the main point in your notes is the new birth is dependent on God. That's before we get to our next main point.

The new birth is dependent on God. Here's the deal. You cannot be born again apart from a desperation and a realization that without God, I have no hope.

God's need to come to and understand that's where we are. So Nicodemus asked, how can this be? I don't understand it.

The whole point of John 3 verses 1 through verse 10, what it's focusing on is not what Nicodemus can do.

- [29 : 20] So verses 1-10 of John 3, Jesus is focusing not on what Nicodemus can do, but on what is done for him and what God has done for him.

So when it comes to the gospel, God's not up in heaven saying, I tell you what, try, really work, start going to church, start kind of cleaning up your life, and I'll meet you halfway.

I'll meet you in the middle. It doesn't work that way. There are a lot of people who think it works that way. Well, I want to get right with God, so therefore I'm going to go to church. Now, that's a good starting point, but going to church is not going to get you right with God.

Cleaning up your life is not going to get you right with God. Stopping cursing, stopping getting drunk, whatever, is not going to get you right with God.

Because that's going back to what can I do? Remember, that's what the rich young ruler asked, what can I do? That's what Nicodemus asked, what can I do? Jesus is saying, it's not what you can do, it's about what's already been done for you, or what is done for you.

- [30 : 31] That's the gospel. Without him, without God meeting us where we are in our sin, being spiritually sick, being spiritually dead, if God would not meet us where we are, we would have no hope.

So we cannot, so the new birth is dependent upon God. And then next, not only does God reveal our need, main point number one, main point number two is, part of the gospel is, God changes our heart.

God changes our heart. Now Nicodemus is confused. He's wondering, how in the world does this happen? I mean, how can this be? This is what Jesus clearly says to him in verse number five.

Jesus answered, most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. What Jesus is effectively saying to Nicodemus is, Nicodemus, something has to happen in you in order to be right with God.

It has to happen to you from the inside out. Nicodemus, you need a change of heart. And that's what he's talking about in verse number five.

- [31 : 46] So what does this mean unless you're born of water and of the spirit? I want to start off by saying he's not talking about water baptism here. This is a very, very confusing portion of scripture.

There are a lot of commentators who kind of go here and there on what does it mean by being born of water. Well, if you go to the Old Testament, if you go to a number of places in the Old Testament, one place in particular, God is saying to Israel, when he is going to come to them and he is going to, to do his work in them, he says, I will wash you with clean water.

I will cleanse you. So in effect, not real water, but what God is saying to his people, when I come to you, when I send my Holy Spirit to you, when I come to be a part of your life, he said, just like taking fresh, clean water, he says, I will wash you from the inside out.

And so he's saying, unless you're born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. So what does it mean? Well, first of all, God cleanses us. Part of the gospel is, God cleanses us.

It's a picture of water. He washes us. Titus chapter 3, verse 5, a very familiar verse for some of you. Not by works of righteousness, which we have done.

- [33 : 09] That's not how we're saved. Not by works of righteousness, which we have done. But how are we saved? According to his mercy, he saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

It goes back to that Old Testament picture of I will wash you with clean water. And that happens in the regeneration. That happens when God takes our old dead spiritual life.

He replaces it with a brand new life. We were once spiritually dead, now we're spiritually alive. And renewing. So Titus 3, 5, and I think is pointing back to John chapter 3, verse 20.

Because Titus says, Paul is saying to Titus, he has saved us through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. This is the water and the Spirit, I believe Jesus is talking about in John chapter 3.

So he cleans us. Then next, we talked about this last week, the Holy Spirit indwells us. Part of salvation is the Holy Spirit comes to be within us.

[34 : 15] Jesus said, I'm going to not leave you comfortless. I'm going to send the comforter, which is the Holy Spirit. That's what he told the man before he left to go back to heaven.

He says, go wait in Jerusalem. He says, because in a few days you're going to get the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit will indwell you. Then you will have the power to accomplish what I want to accomplish in you.

That's what salvation is all about. This is what happens when God changes our heart. God reveals our need and he changes our heart.

And then thirdly, third main point is, God enables our belief. Now in these first ten or eleven verses, what we've been talking about in John chapter three, is about what God does.

It's about what God does in making it possible for us to be right with him. Remember he says you can't do it. You've got to be born from above. It's a matter of being washed by regeneration and the Holy Spirit indwelling you.

[35 : 23] He comes into your life. He cleans up your life. The Holy Spirit indwells you. When you get to verse ten, verse ten or eleven of John chapter three, we see a shift.

And what we begin to see is a key word. And that key word is believe. We see this word a number of times. We just read that word.

We read it in John chapter three verse sixteen. It's mentioned I think seven times in this passage. And the gospel is what God has done for us in that all who come to Jesus, trust him as their savior, are reconciled to him forever through faith alone.

That's what it takes to be right with God. Just simple faith. Not works, not being good, not going to church, not going through receiving the seven sacraments, not doing anything, but trusting in what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary.

scripture is very clear about how the gospel is appropriated or how we come to be right with God and is through faith.

[36 : 33] By God's grace, through faith. So here's where we begin to see our act in salvation, our believing in the context of God's act in salvation.

They go together. Now don't miss this. Again, we don't just wake up one day and say to ourselves, I'm going to have faith in God. Because the Bible over and over and over and over again says, no one seeks after God.

There is none righteous. No, not one. And we see this specifically in John chapter 6. As we go over a few chapters, John 6 verse 44, listen to what Jesus says, no one.

Now who's included in no one? Everyone? No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. So what did I just say?

No one wakes up at any point in time and says, I want to get right with God. Doesn't happen. Why? Because if you really understand what it means to be right with God, it means you've got to totally divest yourself of your will, of your work, of everything, and coming to God with nothing and saying, God, thank you.

[37 : 56] Jesus is the only way and I bring nothing to this deal. And it's all what you can do. And you realize that we don't even bring our faith? I'm going to explain that in just a moment.

Now, Acts 16, 14. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira who worshipped God.

Key phrase, the Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. So what happened? The lady comes, she hears the gospel. What needed to take place?

The Bible says God opened her heart so she could believe. God opened her heart. We also see in Acts 11, 18. Acts 11, 18. When they heard these things, when the people heard these things, they became silent.

And they glorified God saying, then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.

[39 : 03] Think about it. The Gentiles repentance was a gift from God. God was the one that granted them repentance. Very simply, faith is based in God's grace.

By His grace, in faith, God gives us the ability to trust Him. He opens our hearts, opens our minds, and then our part in it is we trust it.

We simply respond to what He is doing in our lives. So, by His grace, we turn from sin. We don't remain in darkness.

We turn from the darkness. We turn from our sin. As a matter of fact, the first message that Peter preaches in the book of Acts, Acts 3, verse 19, what's the message?

Repent and turn to God. Change your mind about the way you're going and turn to God. And so, this whole thing is, by grace, we turn from sin, and secondly, by His grace, we trust in Christ.

[40 : 08] By God's grace, we trust in Christ. This goes back to verses 14, verses 15, in John chapter 3. Old Testament, remember we read about just like the people looked up to the serpent on the pole?

It's an interesting story. You go back, the Jews had turned from God, and He had sent them a plague. They were bit by poisonous snakes, and people were dying.

and He says, put on a pole this snake, this image of a snake, put on a pole, and when the people look at it, they will be healed, and they won't die.

The point was, it was not the snake on a pole. It was looking to God's provision. It was looking to God. And so, even in the New Testament, when it goes back to that, Jesus says, it's just like when the Jews looked on the pole, they were looking to God for their provision, or for the provision of health, and he says that they were believing in God for His provision.

Same thing here. We look to Christ as the only one who can reconcile us to God. Nobody else. Christ is the only one who can cleanse us from our sin, and we trust in Christ, and this is the heart of the gospel.

[41 : 32] Acts 16, 31. So they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And to you this morning, if you're not sure if you're right with God, maybe you look at your life and you've taken inventory and you go, you know what, I'm not sure that I've been that great.

I've got some things that I just don't know if God will accept me. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ, and not maybe, not possibly, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

And your household, everyone in your home, everyone in your family who trust in Christ, the Bible says, will be delivered from the penalty of sin, will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, will be brought into the family of God, welcomed in, because the alternative is, as the Bible says, the lake of fire separated from God forever.

And I've heard people make fun of that and say, oh, it's going to be a party forever, because I'm going to be with my friends. Guess what, you won't be able to see them, all you'll hear is, as the Bible says, wailing and gnashing of teeth, and being in torment forever.

But there's a free gift that's being offered, and it's eternal life. And then the last main point that we see as Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, it is God that transforms our lives.

[43 : 04] God transforms our lives. Listen to verse 21 in John 3. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.

So, when we come to Christ, God transforms our lives, and he's continually transforming our lives, being more and more like Christ.

I want us to see two truths that happens when God transforms our lives. First thing is, he transforms us for eternal good. He transforms us for eternal good.

When the Holy Spirit indwells us, when we trust Christ as our Savior, he is going to begin cleaning house. That's a given. That's a guarantee. The moment we trust Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit indwells us, he begins attempting to clean house.

Positionally, as we talked about, I think it was last week, positionally, or the week before, positionally, the moment we trust Jesus as our Savior, it's like a bank account.

[44 : 14] God puts, it deposits into our bank account the entire righteousness of Jesus Christ. And so, when he looks upon us, he doesn't see our sin, he doesn't see that we're morally bankrupt, he doesn't see that we're evil, he doesn't see that we're spiritually dead, we're made alive, and God sees the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to us, that has been applied into our account, and then the Holy Spirit begins, practically, to transform us for eternal good.

And then, the last thing, he transforms us for his eternal glory. Remember, did you catch that in John 3, 21, it's a great phrase at the end, but whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that, so that, here's the why, so that it may be plainly seen that God has done it through you.

That's why God transforms us. So the world won't look at us and say, oh wow, look at how good a person that is. man, look, they are, man, they are just, they are a pillar of the community.

No, they will look at us and say, look how great God is. Look at how awesome God is, and God will get the glory. So what is God doing in the new birth?

He's showing his power. He's showing his plan. Remember last week we looked at God predetermined in eternity past that all who trust Christ as their Savior are going to be adopted into his family.

[45 : 50] Everyone that trusts him will become a part of his family. This is not a second thought of God. It is what he has planned. He is making it clear that he's the only one that could do this for us.

And this is a picture of the new birth that we have in John 3. We have to realize our need. We have to realize that we are lost and need a Savior without God.

Because if we don't, we're going to die in our sin, spend eternity in the lake of fire, apart from God, being tormented forever. That is not good news. So we have to realize that we have a need.

It's like we could think of so many different illustrations. It's like having no money and you're going bankrupt and you don't realize, you know what, you need some help. It's like being totally way off on your budget and you're clueless.

You have to realize you need some help before you'll ask for help. Same thing with salvation. We have to realize we have a need. The second thing is we have to realize, just like Jesus said, we've got to be changed from the inside out.

[47 : 00] We can't do it on our own. That's God's part. God then enables our belief. He lifts the blinders from our eyes that Satan's put there. He helps us to understand the truth. He gives us the grace.

He gives us the ability to believe we respond by believing and then God transforms our lives. So here is the ultimate question in your notes.

Am I born again? Am I born again? I ask everyone here in this room this morning, I ask everyone here listening to this recording, am I born again?

Jesus said, it's a must. It's not an option. Have I come to the point where I realize that apart from Jesus, I'm hopeless?

Have I realized that I'm morally evil? Have I realized that I'm spiritually bankrupt? Have I realized that I am spiritually dead without any hope of ever getting right with God?

[48 : 10] When I come to that point and realize that and in my utter despair realize God made it possible for my sin to be forgiven, to become a part of his family, God provided that in Jesus Christ.

Jesus died on the cross. He who knew no sin, the Bible says, became sin for us. And until we come face to face with that, in our desperation, come to God and say, God, I need you. And I trust what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary.

He did it for me. He took my penalty. There's a free gift that is being offered. He's offering to transfer me his life for my faith.

And the moment I say, God, that's what I want. I'm giving up myself and I'm trusting you. The Bible says, all who call, promises, all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And then he begins to transform your life. Am I born again? Please do not leave here today without knowing for sure. In just a moment after we pray, we'll have an opportunity for you to, if you're not sure, and this still doesn't really make total sense to you, I would like for you to set aside your pride, make your way down here, and we'll have someone go privately to take a Bible and show you how you can know for sure that your sins are forgiven, how you can know for sure that you're right with God.

[49 : 39] Let's pray. Lord, this morning as we've heard your message, as we've talked about what it means to be born from above, what it means to be born again, Lord, I ask that if there's anyone here this morning that is not sure of their relationship with you, Lord, that you would draw them, open their minds, open their hearts to understand what it means, the good news of Jesus Christ, to become a part of your family, to have their entire life up to this point erased, a clean slate, get a brand new life, become a new creation as your Bible tells us.

Behold, all things are becoming new. Lord, help us to understand and realize as we've gone back to the basics to understand what the gospel really is.

You've made it all possible and all you expect from us is for us to respond in faith and believe. We trust you.

We thank you in advance, Father, for what you're going to, for what you are going to accomplish. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Let's all stand, please. And as you take out your connection cards, as we do each time together, these are some next steps, some things that as we are considering what God has done in our life, the first thing is, if this is where you are to realize my need for salvation.

Realize I can't be good enough. Realize that religion won't do it. Realize that church won't do it. But only a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Secondly, believe that Jesus died for me.

[51 : 42] And not enough to believe that Jesus died for you because the Bible says even the demons believe. But, third thing is, trust Christ as my Savior.

Trust Christ. Trust what he did on the cross of Calvary to be full payment for your sin and simply receive the free gift of everlasting life, a relationship with him by saying, Lord, I want to be part of your family.

If that's you this morning, with every head bowed, every eye closed, make your way down and we'll have someone take the Bible and show you how you can know for sure. It's not a secret, but it's a possible, it's the way possible to have a relationship with God, brand new life, forgiveness of sin, and a brand new future.

Father, we thank you for each one here this morning. We thank you for loving us. We thank you that you have made it possible for us to know you and that if we simply realize our need, realize that apart from you, we are spiritually dead.

And if we believe that Jesus is God, the Son of God, who came to this earth, died on the cross in our place, who paid our penalty, who paid our sin debt, who paid the penalty for sin, and realize that he did it for us, did it for me personally, and that all it takes is belief and trust, surrendering ourselves, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, realizing that it means a brand new life with God in control.

[53 : 57] All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Bless us today. We thank you for your goodness. We thank you for the free gift of salvation. And Lord, we thank you in advance for this food that we're going to receive in a few moments.

We thank you, Lord, for those that have been preparing it. Thank you for the food that has been brought. Lord, we just thank you for your blessing. I thank you for each one here today. Help us, Lord, to be able to get to know one another better, as we enjoy spending time with one another today.

We'll give you all the praise, all the honor, and all the glory for it. We thank you for this offering as well that we're about to receive. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated as our ushers come to receive our offering.

Drop those connection cards in the offering as it is received. I've been good being with you today. We're not done here. We're going to be having some good food before we go.

We're going to have an opportunity to play some games. We have some adult games too, right? Oh, yeah.