

Lessons from the Gospel of John (2): The Need of the Moral—Life's Regenerating

Bible reading

You may find it helpful to also read the entire case found in John 3:1-36.

John 3:1, 3, 6, 16

1 But there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.

Introduction

Life has a principle—to change death into life. In John chapter 3 we see the first of nine cases that illustrate this principle—the case of a moral man. No matter how good his human life was, his fundamental problem was that he did not have the divine life. Teaching could not help him. Religion could not help him. As an empty vessel, he needed to be born again, that is, to be regenerated and to receive the life of God in addition to his natural, human life.

Bible study reading

Please prayerfully read through the following portions of ministry related to this lesson.

When Nicodemus came to the Lord Jesus, the Lord took the opportunity to reveal the true need of mankind. In His conversation with Nicodemus, the Lord revealed that regardless of how good we are, we still need regeneration. Regeneration is the first need of man. Moral people, as well as immoral people, need regeneration. Many Christians hold the mistaken concept that people need regeneration simply because they are fallen. However, if man had never fallen, he still would have needed regeneration. Even if Adam had not fallen, he still would have needed regeneration. That was why God put him in front of the tree of life. If Adam had partaken of the tree of life, he would have been regenerated.

Since we are human beings, we all have a human life. The problem is not a matter of whether or not our human life is good or bad. Regardless of the kind of human life we have, as long as we do not have the divine life, we need to be regenerated. To be regenerated simply means to have the divine life besides our human life. God's eternal purpose is that man be a vessel to contain the divine life. Our being with our human life is a vessel to contain God as life. The divine life is God's goal. The divine life is God Himself. God's goal is that we, as people with a human life, receive the divine life into our being as our real life. This is the true meaning of regeneration.

Many Christians are not clear about this fact, thinking that regeneration is necessary simply because we are fallen and sinful. According to this concept, we need to be regenerated because our life is bad and cannot be improved. This concept is wrong. I say once again that even if Adam in the

garden of Eden had never fallen, he still would have needed to be regenerated, to be born again, that he might have another life, the life of God.

To be regenerated, to be born again, does not mean to adjust or correct ourselves. It means to have the life of God, just as to be born of our parents means to have the life of our parents. To be regenerated is to be born of God (John 1:13), and to be born of God is to have the life of God, that is, the eternal life (3:15-16). If we have the life of God, we are the sons of God. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 8, section 3)

Going deeper

Please read or listen to these materials for an in-depth study of this lesson.

Further reading:

[*Life-study of John*, msg. 8](#)

[*What is Regeneration?*](#)

Radio broadcast link:

Broadcast 14, [*The Need of the Moral People—Life's Regenerating \(1\)*](#)

Footnotes from Recovery Version of the New Testament:

John 3:1, footnote 1

John 3:2, footnote 1

John 3:6, footnote 2

John 3:16, footnote 2

Questions for personal or corporate study:

References in brackets indicate readings or broadcasts that may be helpful in answering the questions.

- What is the meaning of regeneration? (Radio broadcast 14)
- Where does regeneration take place within man? (John 3:6, footnote 2)
- How do the nine cases in the Gospel of John expose the real condition and need of all people? (*Life-study of John*, msg. 8, section 1)

Next week

The Need of the Immoral—Life's Satisfying

The first of the nine cases presented in the Gospel of John is deeply profound and surprising to our natural concept. Although Nicodemus was a highly virtuous and God-fearing man, he had no realisation of his real need to have another birth, to receive the divine life with a completely new nature. Next week we will see a striking contrast to this case—an immoral woman of despised and low status who came to collect water from a well in the heat of the day, when no one would see her. The Saviour exposed how she had an inner thirst and was drinking water that could never truly satisfy. What she needed was the living water.

Works Cited

Lee, Witness. *Life-study of John*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1985. www.ministrybooks.org

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