

born again when he is old?" This shows that Nicodemus was thinking strictly on the physical level. Jesus was talking about having a new heart. Nicodemus had been thinking about new bones and flesh. He said, "How can a man enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?" He was reasoning, "How can a man undo the past and start life again when he is old?"

Since Nicodemus was thinking and talking on the physical level, Jesus showed him that the laws that govern the spiritual and the physical are not the same. Jesus explained, "That which is born of the physical is physical, and that which is spiritual is spiritual." Nicodemus was not being instructed to be born again in the physical sense. Instead, he was being told that he had to be born from above, or by the Holy Spirit from heaven.

What does it mean to be *born again*? The term *born again* can be found in many places. It has almost become a popularized fad among many, and probably means different things to different people. What does it mean to be *born again*? *Does it mean anything to you?*

Let's go to God's Word, the Bible, to see what this term means and why a new birth is necessary for all people. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Notice that he specifically says all people have sinned—that means good *and* bad. Because Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, all people after them were born with a sinful nature. Romans 5:12 says, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death (physical and spiritual), and sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

We cannot place all of the blame for our sin upon Adam and Eve. As we look at our own lives, we can see that to do wrong is a natural tendency. The Bible says in Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord (God) hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." We *do* have a sinful nature. Evil man is lost from God and His plan because of sin. Romans 6:23 states, "The wages of sin is death" (again, physical and spiritual). Yes, sin *does* pay wages. A life of sin may result in bad

health, evil companions, broken homes, and a defeated attitude toward life itself. We have all heard of the horrors of hell: the fire, the darkness and the eternal torment. But beyond that, I believe the worst wage that sin pays is that at death, or the second coming of Jesus, our future *doom* is sealed.

We *do* have time to make our decision to become "born again"—but that time is *limited*. After we die, or after Jesus comes again, we are offered no more chance to be a Christian. When a sinner goes to hell, there is no further contact with anything that is good and righteous. It will mean total sin and darkness *forever*. The ultimate horror of hell is the knowledge that all possibility of contact with God is lost forever.

Let's refer to Romans 6:23 again, "But the gift of God is eternal life" (from the last part of the passage). Did you note the word "gift"? God is offering you a gift. The great God who made the universe, heavens and earth, is offering you a personal gift. To receive any gift, all you have to do is accept it. Romans 5:8 says, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Just think of the love that it took for God to do that for us.

A sacrifice was needed for sin. In the Old Testament, animal sacrifices were offered for sin. These sacrifices were only a covering for sin; however, they did not actually take the sin away. Jesus, with His two natures (Godly and physical) was the perfect sacrifice for sin. His death took away the sins of the world. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Bible says that God is not willing to have anyone perish. God wanted man to be brought back into a right standing with Him, but there was no way for us to be saved without the sacrifice of Jesus (Acts 4:12, Matt., 18:11).

To accept this gift, we must realize that we cannot be "good" by ourselves. There is nothing good in us. We must give up the control of our lives to Jesus. Everything we are, and have, must be placed under His complete control. This is what we call taking Jesus as our Lord and personal

Saviour. The Bible says in Romans 10:9 that if we take Jesus as our Lord and then believe that God raised Him from the dead, then we would be saved. With our minds and hearts we accept Jesus as Lord of our lives; then we must declare with our mouth this fact to others. In doing so, we make a clean break with our past lives. We must confess our sins to God.

There will be many wrongs to be made right. Money may have been stolen, lies told, laws broken, and many other misdeeds. All of these things must be recognized and owned up to.

Another part of God's gift is the gift of the Holy Spirit. This comes to us at the time of our new birth. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins and guides us in our Christian lives. After we are born again, we will notice several changes occurring in our lives. We will have an attitude of victory over sin and an attitude that is positive toward life in general. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Our attitudes toward other people will change. We will want to help them to become "born again" also. Our lives will become outgoing and will not be self-centered anymore—a true testimony to what God can do. We will also start bearing spiritual fruit—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance." We will find that we lose many of our old friends and acquaintances, but we will gain many new ones as we come to know more people who are Christians.

It is very important to point out at this time that being "born again" is not merely a title or label. It is more than joining a church and signing a decision card. It is not a manmade reform of life-style—it is the direct contact between God and man through the Holy Spirit.

If you feel a tug in your heart that you are a sinner and need a new "boss" for your life, this is the Holy Spirit calling upon *you*, from God. Kneel down and humble yourself before God and accept Him as your personal Saviour. Then pray this prayer: