

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

# 22

Dearest Grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the importance of being "born again". This is an expression that is often repeated with little or no thought to what it actually means. For your convenience here is the primary passage of Scripture from which the expression comes.

**"Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:1-8)**

I have taken the liberty of underlining a sentence which I think is key to understanding what Jesus was explaining. The concept is so simple that we learn it in Kindergarten. Life comes from seeds, and every seed produces after it's own kind. (See Gen. 1:11, 12). If you want an apple tree, you must plant an apple seed.

The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom. That's why it will last forever. Everything physical grows old and wears out. You probably would not be happy living in a house that was built a thousand years ago. You probably would not be happy driving a car that was built a hundred years ago. You probably would not be happy owning a cell phone that was manufactured only ten years ago. Physical things invariably grow old and wear out.

Nicodemus had physical life because a physical seed was placed in the physical womb of his earthly mother. As Jesus said "Flesh gives birth to flesh". Nicodemus grew old and died 2,000 years ago. Everything physical is temporary. Paul said it like this: **"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."** (2 Cor 4:18)

If Nicodemus wanted spiritual life it would have to come from a spiritual seed. As Jesus said: "Spirit gives birth to spirit". How simple! How profound! Peter wrote: **"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the**

## **word that was preached to you.” (1 Peter 1:23-25)**

Jesus is described in the Bible in a great many ways. He is King, High Priest, Prophet, Shepherd, Mediator, Etc. Two metaphors applied to Jesus are of particular interest in what it means to be “born again”.

First, let us consider that Jesus is a “Seed”. The first time Jesus is mentioned in Scripture He is referred to as the “Seed of woman” (Gen. 3:15). Then He is referred to as the “Seed” of Abraham (Gal. 3:16). He is also the “Seed” of David, Etc. Being “born again” is as simple as receiving Jesus into your heart. Receiving Jesus places within us a Spiritual Seed that produces Spiritual Life.

But Jesus is also the “Word”. John wrote: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1, 14)** A word is a vehicle of communication. If I say the word “elephant” you can immediately form a mental image of what I am talking about. Nobody knew exactly what God was like, however, until Jesus came. He is the “Word” of God. He has made God known (Jn. 1:18). In Him dwells all the fulness of God in a body (Col. 2:9). Peter now ties together the incorruptible “Seed” and the “Word of God”. Remember: **“. . . you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”**

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

Nicodemus could not “see” a “spirit” and neither can we. That’s why we can only be saved by faith. The Scriptures teach: **“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Heb 11:1)**

Again, Jesus used a simple illustration to help us understand spiritual reality. He reminded Nicodemus that wind is invisible too. No one can see the wind, but everyone can see what the wind does. **“So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”**

Permit me to tell you again about a trip I took to the jungles of Equador many years ago. I spent some time with a tribe of Indians originally known as “Aucas”, which means “naked” or “savage”. They prefer to be known, however, as “Huaorani” which means “the people”. This stone age tribe has the dubious distinction of being perhaps the most violent people group on earth. They not only killed all outsiders who ventured into their territory, they also killed one another. In fact, 60% of the deaths within the tribe came as the result of killing one another.

When I got there, however, this tribe had experienced a dramatic change. They were “born again”. They were like “new creatures” (2 Cor. 5:17). While I could not see the Holy Spirit any more than I could see the wind, I could see what the Holy Spirit was doing in their lives. I stayed in their midst without fear.

As Jesus said: **“By their fruit you will recognize them” (Matt. 7:16)**. When you pick an apple from the tree you may be certain that someone planted an apple seed. When you see people behaving like Jesus, you know that Jesus has been planted in their hearts.

Again, thanks for taking time to indulge an old man. I want to delve into the subject of being “born again” more deeply, but will wait until the next letter to do so. Mere knowledge, however, is not sufficient. Each and every one of us must make the personal decision to invite Jesus into our hearts so that we can be “born again” and enter into the Kingdom of God.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce