

John 3:1-7 NKJV ¹There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This 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 that You do unless God is with him.”

³Jesus answered and said to him, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”

⁴Nicodemus 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?”

⁵Jesus answered, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.** ⁶**That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.** ⁷**Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”**

In this conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus stresses how vital it is to be “born again”. The “new birth” is something that must take place in the life of each and every person who hopes to be saved. We can also call it *conversion*. It is the moment that we receive new life through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul explains the same idea today in our passage from Ephesians 2:1-10

Jesus said that we must be born again. We need to fully grasp the significance of conversion.

- I. At the moment of our conversion we move from death and life. 2:1-3
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- I. At the moment of our conversion we move from death and life. 2:1-3

A. When Adam and Eve sinned, they died spiritually and the whole race has followed them. This is known as *original sin*. We are born with a tendency to resist or rebel against God.

1. God had warned them that eating of the one tree would result in death, but they ate. They did not immediately die *physically*, although they slowly began to do so.
2. The immediate result was *spiritual* death. Death in Scripture is not annihilation, but separation. From that moment on, they no longer enjoyed that intimacy with God which they had before the fall.
3. They still had the power to choose right or wrong, or do good or evil, but as a result of sin, their natural tendencies bent them in the wrong direction. Sin had corrupted them – and continues to corrupt the whole human race.

B. Those who are spiritually dead are rightly called **sons of disobedience** or **children of wrath**. Jesus actually called some of His opponents “children of the devil,” as they were essentially under his authority. The **prince of the power of the air is the spirit who now works in them**. This illustrates the huge gap between the saved and the lost.

John 8:39-44 NKJV ³⁹They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.”

Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. ⁴⁰But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. ⁴¹You do the deeds of your father.”

Then they said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God.”

⁴²Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. ⁴³Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. ⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

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II. From the moment conversion we are in Christ, possessing eternal life 2:4-7

A. You may not be in heaven physically right now, but if you are in Christ, and Christ is in heaven, then God sees you as “seated in the heavenly places **in Christ Jesus.**”

B. Whatever we may experience of God’s grace at present is simply a foretaste of the **exceeding riches** which are to come.

C. And the life God gives us is age-abiding life – eternal or everlasting life.

John 10:27-28 NKJV ²⁷My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸And I give them **eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.**

Shortly before His betrayal and crucifixion Jesus prayed to His Father saying:

John 17:3 NKJV And this is **eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

D. If we are in Christ, we should think of ourselves as a completely new people.

2 Cor 5:17 NKJV Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

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III. Our conversion happens through faith in Jesus Christ. 2:8-9

A. The word **that** in v.8 cannot refer to either **grace** or to **faith** which come before it, because the Greek grammar doesn’t allow for that. It’s best to think of the whole package of salvation as being the gift of God. Elsewhere we read that *eternal life* is the gift of God.

Rom 6:23 NKJV For the wages of sin is death, but **the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

B. So God gives us eternal life and He gives it freely to all who trust in Jesus. But make no mistake, we are responsible to believe – we receive eternal life by faith. We must intentionally put our faith in Jesus Christ.

C. When the jailer in Philippi asked Paul and Silas, “What must I do to be saved?” They answered him, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved...” Consider the words of John 3:

John 3:16-18 NKJV ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

D. There is nothing that we can do to merit salvation. We must receive the gift that God offers through faith in Jesus Christ – or there will be no salvation available to us at all.

E. Saving faith has three aspects to it: **belief** in certain facts about Jesus, **trust** that He has the power to save, and **devotion** to Him as a follower to a master. All three aspects can be seen in Christ’s call to discipleship:

Matt 16:24-27 NKJV ²⁴Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

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IV. Our conversion should be followed by a life full of good works. 2:10

A. Good works are to be expected from those who call themselves “Christians.” They are the natural outflow of a life that is committed to Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:11-14 NKJV ¹¹For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹²teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, **zealous for good works.**

Application:

Two important questions: 1. What is wrong with the human race? 2. How do we fix it?

1. What is wrong with the human race?

Sin has separated us from God, keeping us in a constant state of resistance to or rebellion against Him. We are dead in our trespasses and sins. We are under the authority of Satan, which is not a complete or ultimate authority, but is greater than any power that we can break without God's intervention.

2. How do we fix it?

We allow God to transform us through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible refers to this as a *rebirth*. We need to begin a new life – a life of **belief** in Jesus, **trust** in Jesus and **devotion** to Jesus Christ.

Implications of these answers:

- The importance of conversion for all of us – and the humility that this implies. We all stand on the same level when we stand before God.
- That we need to seek assurance of our own conversion.

2 Cor 13:5 NKJV *Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.*

- Assurance of salvation from the Apostle John

John 5:24 NKJV *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*

1Jn 3:14 NKJV *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.*

- The importance of conversion for everyone who is lost.
- The importance of evangelism and missions as the means of communicating the gospel to a lost and dying world.

Rom 10:14 NKJV *How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*

- The importance of good works as evidence of our conversion.
- That Christians should be characterized by good works

Titus 3:8 NKJV *This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God **should be careful to maintain good works**. These things are good and profitable to men.*

Hebrews 10:24 NKJV *And let us consider one another in order **to stir up love and good works**,*

Matt 5:14-16 NKJV ¹⁴*“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, **that they may see your good works** and glorify your Father in heaven.*