

1st Requirement for Church Membership: One must be saved.

Lesson for Sunday, November 10, 2024

INTRODUCTION: *Don't forget to start on page 3 & the story from Baptist history!*

- ⇒ ICE BREAKER: Several years ago, American Express had an ad campaign that featured the slogan, "Membership has privileges." What are some of the different organizations that people join, and what are the typical requirements for membership? *Allow for some discussion...*
- ⇒ This is the fourth lesson in our series, "Why are we Baptists?" We are looking at the Bible doctrines that separate Baptists from other faith practices.
- ⇒ So far, we have looked at the importance of God's Word in the lives of Christians and the church, and last week we were reminded that our mission is the Great Commission.
- ⇒ For the next two weeks, we will be discussing what is required to be a member of a Bible-believing Baptist church. There are two specific requirements.
- ⇒ The first requirement for an individual to be a member of a Baptist church is that the person must be born again.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. The Importance of Being Born Again
 - a. Read John 3:3-7. The words of Jesus could not be clearer. If we expect to see the Kingdom of God (Heaven), we must be born again.
 - b. There are several different terms that the Bible and Christian people use to describe born again: salvation, regeneration, saved, new birth, etc.
 - c. It is of the utmost importance that we have a clear understanding of this vital doctrine. There is no other way to become a Christian but by being born again.
 - d. It is also the door of entrance into the local church. Those that do not enter here do not enter at all.
 - e. Here is a simple definition of what it means to be saved: It is an act of God by which He imparts spiritual life to the believer in Jesus Christ. Let's unpack this in a little more detail.
2. What being born again is NOT
 - a. There are two main things we do not want to confuse with salvation.
 - b. First, regeneration is not **baptism**. Go to Acts 8:35-37.
 - i. When the Ethiopian requested baptism, Phillip pointed out that he must first believe with all his heart.
 - ii. It was an act of believing, not the act of baptism, that saved the man.
 - iii. Later, in Acts 16:31, Paul assured the Philippian jailer that if he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ he would be saved.
 - iv. If baptism was identical to regeneration, why would Paul not make that clear?
 - c. Second, regeneration is not **reformation**.
 - i. To reform one's life is a process taken by someone to improve their behavior.
 - ii. Regeneration is a supernatural work of God (see James 1:18). It is a spiritual intervention. It marks the beginning of one's eternal life.

- iii. See Titus 3:5. No one could justly condemn a person for wanting to improve their life. But our very best efforts – without God’s initiative – will not produce within us the change which is acceptable to God.
3. What being born again IS
- a. Let’s focus on two specific things that the Bible says about what salvation is.
 - b. First, regeneration is a spiritual **quicken**ing, a new birth.
 - i. Ephesians 2:1 – By nature, humans are physically alive, but spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins.
 - ii. The new birth imparts a new spiritual life, the life of God, so that from that point on the re-born person is someone who has come forth from the dead.
 - iii. John 5:24 says the saved person has passed from spiritual death to spiritual life.
 - iv. The one who is born again enters a new realm of life. The sins one used to love are now distasteful. They are a new creation (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).
 - c. Second, regeneration is the impartation of a new **nature**.
 - i. 2 Peter 1:4 – The saved person’s new nature is really God’s nature.
 - ii. Christ now lives in the believer (Galatians 2:20).
 - iii. As physical birth enables us to have the life (or nature) of our parents within us, so spiritual birth enables us to share in the life of God.
4. The Need to be Born Again
- a. We know what salvation is, but why is it necessary?
 - b. First, because our **sinful condition** demands it.
 - i. We are all born in the wrong spiritual family.
 - ii. We are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1) and are separated from God (Eph. 4:18). We are spiritually lost (Luke 19:10). And if we die in this state, we will perish (John 3:16).
 - iii. We must be born again to enter the family of God.
 - c. Second, God’s **holiness** requires a new birth.
 - i. In Hebrews 12:14 we read, “without holiness no one shall see the Lord.” This means that regeneration is absolutely necessary.
 - ii. The change required that enables one to be holy takes place only when one is born again.
 - iii. Remember that to have the life of God, we must have the nature of God.
5. The Way to be Born Again
- a. It is stated many times in the Bible, but the most familiar must be John 3:16.
 - b. “Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish.” We must believe. We must give assent to the message.
 - c. Personal faith in Christ as Redeemer is the condition to be born again (see John 1:12-13).

CONCLUSION:

- ⇒ First, take the time to encourage your class members to be sure they are saved. Offer to meet with them if they have questions.
- ⇒ Second, remind them that it is not a matter of remembering the exact moment we were saved. It all depends on who you are trusting. Are you trusting solely in Christ?

A Conversion that Shook the World

On December 15, 1850, a young man happened to walk into a Primitive Methodist Chapel in Colchester, England. It was a cold, snowy day, and the storm was so fierce that the scheduled preacher did not arrive to preach. Fifteen people made up the congregation.

A local layman finally agreed to preach. He chose for his text, Isaiah 45:22, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." It only took a few minutes for the layman to exhaust the text, so he began to emphasize the idea of looking to Christ.

Seeing what appeared to be the guilty face of the lad under the balcony, he fixed his eyes on the teen, and pointing with his finger he shouted, "Young man, you're in trouble! Look to Jesus Christ! Look! Look!" And look he did. That morning Charles Spurgeon came to know Christ.

Later, Spurgeon would write about the fact that the storm of conviction that was raging in his heart that morning was even greater than the storm raging outside the church! But when Spurgeon experienced God's salvation by simple, saving faith in Christ's redemptive work for sin, his long-experienced sense of terrible guilt was removed. This event was the great pivotal point in his life, and he was a new creation in Jesus Christ.

Spurgeon's conversion proved to be so intrinsic in his nature that it became foundational to his preaching. His burden caused him to present the meaning of being born again as clearly as possible, and his desire that others might receive the same deliverance set him at once to the work of telling others.

Charles Spurgeon would go to be remembered as the Prince of Preachers, impacting thousands of lives with the simple message, "You must be born again!"

The history lesson is taken from *This Day in Baptist History*.

The lesson outline was taken from *Basic Baptist Beliefs* by Harold Rawlings.