

Gamma 13

Study 2

1 Peter 1:3-5; 22-25

Questions

1. Look at this passage v 3; 23-25 and John 3: 3-9 what does being born again mean ? Share with us three observations about being born again. How and why should a person be born again ? Share how some of you were born again.

Being born again is basically a complete spiritual makeover of which the new believer has simply no control over.

Being born again implies a completely different existence and even form of life. There are going to be many things that in our old lives we could not see which we now perceive simply because we have new natures that enable us to see spiritual realities which are imperceptible to the normal person.

Being born again now mandates that we live to a radically new set of objectives and functions in our lives . Our current life cannot be just the continuation of the old life with a Christian appendage added in. If a monkey is a higher order of life compared to a plant. If by some miracle a plant became a monkey , would the latter behave like a plant? Staying still and photosynthesizing or would he scamper all over the trees foraging for food which will be plants

There are three main observations

1. Being born again is necessary, not optional.

Without being born again a person cannot even see the kingdom of God much less be part of it.

2. Being born again is a work of God, not man.

This is the process executed by God's spirit independent of man's input or qualifications. Nicodemus was a bible school professor and a politician the finest most spiritually qualified of his time and even he could not enter the kingdom of God on the basis of his qualifications. Jesus mentions the work of the spirit in making men to be born again is like the wind you feel its effects but you cannot control or influence the process. There are no qualifications that would make a

man worthy of being born again. We contribute nothing to the process. A person is elected by God and His Spirit regenerates him....and he is born again.

3. We are Being born again through his Word, not without it.

It is the through the word of God in v 23-25 that a person is born again. This word is the gospel that has been preached to the believers.

The proper response to a person who has been born again is that he will be able to see and believe in Jesus as the Son of God.

2. What do people normally mean by hope? Why is hope important. What is the nature of Christian hope? How is it different from the kind of hope the rest of the non believing community understands.

What people normally mean by hope is that it is the desire for something combined with an anticipation of it happening. In short, hope is the anticipation of something desired. If what is hoped for is an impossibility then it is a fantasy, if what is hoped for is a certainty then it is an expectation like the sun will rise tomorrow of the certainty of death and taxes for everyone. If what is hoped for is close to zero then it is a wish.

Hope is important as it influences the way we live. If we loose hope then often life will have no meaning and suicide is the result.

Hopeful people will be able to establish good goals for the future and have learnt to establish multiple pathways to achieving those goals despite problems. Along the way they develop a strong belief in their ability to achieve those goals either through past achievements or successes or the manner in which they set out to achieve those goals.

Christian hope is not based on our ability to establish multiple pathways to achieving those goals despite problems. Nor is it propelled by a strong belief in our ability to achieve those goals either through past achievements or successes or circumstances.

Christian hope is based on a historical person called Jesus who lived and died for us and was raised from the dead who calls us to live under His rule by the power of His Spirit no matter what the current circumstances are. Christian hope is fixed on Jesus on what He has done and it motivates us to trust Him and to live according to His Word and expect His return one day and our eventual resurrection

3. Why is Christian hope called a living hope and why must one be born again to have this hope? What is the difference between Christian hope and optimism ?

The emphasis is on “living” , we have a living hope and the reason it is “living” is because it is through or based upon the resurrection of Christ. Imagine someone having their house in total darkness because they could not pay the electricity bill. A friend comes up and says “ Not to worry, I will take care of it “ . He disappears and the next 2 hours the lights come on again. The reappearance of the lights is the proof that the bill that was had been paid off. It is all very well and good to talk about Jesus dying for our sins but where the rubber meets the road is when He rose from the dead which meant death was finally defeated. Jesus is not just another is another religious teacher who is showing us the way to God. He is the way because He rose from the dead. No other religious leader who ever lived is alive today. They all show a way which we would have to do our best to follow whether successfully or not there is no assurance. When Jesus came he said John 11:25-26 (ESV) Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” Jesus did not come to show a way He became the way...hence we are invited to share in his resurrection life , our relationship and faith in Him becomes the vehicle through which the vitality of his resurrection life now courses through or veins.

Why does this matter? It matters because one day every single thing that we would have lived for in our short lives will lie in shreds before our very eyes. Our careers can be over with a single mistake or financial crisis totally beyond our control. Our love ones wrenched from our grasp from disease or accident. We will realise that we need a true hope a hope that will not die like everything else in this world will die and the one hope is a living one the resurrected Jesus. The extent to which the bright flames of this hope burn within our hearts will largely determine how boldly and courageously we face the challenges that life will throw at us.

We must be born again to see this hope based on Jesus. If we are not born again it would not be possible to believe Jesus lived and died for us. The Christian hope is part of our new nature in Christ.

Optimism is hope always based on a set of circumstances ..it looks at the odds – how it can turn out and believes the best outcome.

Christian hope looks back at a person..Jesus at what He has done for us and believes the best spiritual outcome based on the person, character and unchanging nature of Jesus and His new covenant with us.

4. What were some of your hopes before becoming born again? What was it that got you up in the morning? Ever had you hopes crushed by circumstances please share? Now that you are born again are your hopes changed and how?

5. These words from Peter 1:4-5 about our inheritance have been historically the bedrock of much of Christian assurance. What does these two verses tell us about our hope and practically how do we apply it in our lives

Inheritance implies that this represents some concrete hope that is kept for us which we will realise in the future. Yet the nature of this inheritance is described in rock solid terms. I remember the advertising for Chartered bank in the 80's was a picture of a huge Sikh guard called Balbir Singh and the tag line was "Big, Strong and Friendly" The aim of the advertisement was to reassure investors and clients that their money was always safe with Chartered Bank that was the main issue with banks whether what we put in them we will get back in this uncertain world we live in. In ancient times the people kept their inheritance in the form of precious metals, grain and fine clothes. These proved very uncertain as the grain would only have to have a bit of moisture and mould and the whole store house would be wiped out. Or the grain could be contaminated and inedible. The finery in clothes would inevitably fade and the gold could be dug up by marauders and stolen. Peter describes the inheritance in terms that speak to the anxieties of the people of his time. The inheritance will not be buried on earth for some chance discovery by marauders it will be in heaven where God is. It cannot fade or lose its value and it cannot be contaminated .

It may very well be that the inheritance would be secure but what of the heir to the inheritance for such is the nature of human life that we too might succumb before we realise our inheritance. What if we could not complete our journey of faith , that by some evil trick the devil puts us in a place there we will lose that which was reserved for us.

Peter says not only is the inheritance protected the heir is also protected.

We are guarded by the power of God and the means why which we will be kept safe is faith. This means that the almighty God with all the unlimited power at his disposal will use that power to keep us safe in the faith. He will grant to us even through the most difficult persecution and the greatest disasters the strength to keep on believing and trusting Him.

6. If a person who used to attend church now declares himself to be an unbeliever after some catastrophe in his life in which he lost a member of his family. He blames God and his family blames God because He did not have the power to keep him from falling. Look at 1 John 2:19 and compare it to verse 5. Was it God who failed to protect him from unbelief?

The apostle John puts it most aptly

1 John 2:19 (ESV) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

The ones who might have declared themselves to be of the faith whether it be by the sinners prayer, baptism or church membership, if they renounce their faith in the end, it just simply means that they were never believers in the first place. The ones kept by God's power right up to the end will be the ones professing and demonstrating their lives of faith. Faith will be that vital ingredient the means by which salvation is going to be effected on the merit of Jesus death and resurrection on the cross.