



Be Born of Water and Spirit

John 3:1–17

“Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are 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.’

March 12, 2017

Thoughts for the Week

Scripture: Matthew 6:10, Matthew 26:39, Matthew 26:53, Mark 1:36-38, John 6:38, John 12:27, Romans 8:26, Romans 15:31,32, 1Corinthians 16:7, 2 Corinthians 12:8.9, James 4:15 & 1 John 5:14,15

TRUE PRAYER SUBMITS TO GOD'S WILL

Expressing true faith in the one true God, true prayer does not insist on its own way with God. Because true prayer has God's honor, kingdom and will as its primary concern, it will always submit and subject its requests to that primary concern that dominate desire. It knows nothing of the 'blab it and grab it' 'name it and claim it' mentality that characterizes much of current thought about prayer. True prayer is not demanding. True prayer does not assume that it will be automatically granted. Rather, as we have seen many times in our own meditations, it is characterized by humility.

In addition, true prayer also acknowledges the superiority of God's infinite knowledge and eternal purposes and perspective over its own finite understanding and earthbound plans and desires.

This attitude of submission to God's will leaves not only the decision, but also the timing and the manner of God's response, in his hands. In the Bible we find that God's will is prioritized, it's more important than human comfort, human plans and human wishes:

Jesus instructed us to pray '... your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' - Matthew 6:10.

Jesus himself prayed 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will' - Matthew 26:39 etc.

Jesus put aside his own well-being for the greater and eternal purpose of God: 'Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?' - Matthew 26:53.

Jesus put the will of God above the demands and expectations of human beings: '... they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come"' - Mark 1:36-38.

Jesus defined his over-riding purpose: 'I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me' - John 6:38

For Jesus, God's will was more important than personal comfort and safety: 'Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!' - John 12:27.

Our understanding of what we ought to pray for is limited: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" - Romans 8:26.

Paul's prayer for personal safety was secondary to his commitment to God's will: 'Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea ... so that by God's will I may come to you ...' Romans 15:31,32.

He knew that his plans and desires could be over-ridden by God's will: '... I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits ...' 1Corinthians 16:7.

And he accepted God's will even when it meant a 'no' answer to his prayers: 'Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"' - 2 Corinthians 12:8,9.

Therefore, we should live with the constant awareness that God might well intervene in our lives: '... you ought to say "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that"' - James 4:15.

If our dominant desire is that God's will be done, if we modify our requests with 'if it be your will' so that *his will is what we desire* over and above our personal preferences, then his promise holds:

'This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that is, we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him' - 1 John 5:14,15.

Happy Birthday – Katie (3/13), Rachel (3/17)

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Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Be born of water - By "water," here, is evidently signified "baptism." Thus the word is used in Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5. Baptism was practiced by the Jews in receiving a Gentile as a proselyte. It was practiced by John among the Jews; and Jesus here says that it is an ordinance of his religion, and the sign and seal of the renewing influences of his Spirit. So he said Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

It is clear from these places, and from the example of the apostles Act 2:38, Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12-13, Acts 8:36, Acts 8:38; Acts 9:18; Acts 10:47-48; Acts 16:15, Acts 16:33; Acts 18:8; Acts 22:16; Galatians 3:27, that they considered this ordinance as binding on all who professed to love the Lord Jesus. And though it cannot be said that none who are not baptized can be saved, yet Jesus meant, undoubtedly, to be understood as affirming that this was to be the regular and uniform way of entering into his church; that it was the appropriate mode of making a profession of religion; and that a man who neglected this, when the duty was made known to him, neglected a plain command of God.

It is clear, also, that any other command of God might as well be neglected or violated as this, and that it is the duty of everyone not only to love the Savior, but to make an acknowledgment of that love by being baptized, and by devoting himself thus to his service.

But, lest Nicodemus should suppose that this was all that was meant, he added that it was necessary that he should "be born of the Spirit" also. This was predicted of the Savior, that he should "baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire," Matthew 3:11. By this is clearly intended that the heart must be changed by the agency of the Holy Spirit; that the love of sin must be abandoned; that man must repent of crime and turn to God; that he must renounce all his evil propensities, and give himself to a life of prayer and holiness, of meekness, purity, and benevolence. This great change is in the Scripture ascribed uniformly to the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Romans 5:5; 1 Peter 1:22.

Cannot enter into - This is the way, the appropriate way, of entering into the kingdom of the Messiah here and hereafter. He cannot enter into the true church here, or into heaven in the world to come, except in connection with a change of heart, and by the proper expression of that change in the ordinances appointed by the Savior.