

Saying Yes to God's Amazing Grace!

Nicodemus appears only a couple of times in the gospels. Most known for his question to Jesus of, "What must I do to receive eternal life", in John chapter 3. Jesus telling him that he must be born again was difficult for him to understand, as it is for many today. He was puzzled by the response of Jesus when he pressed his question about how one could be born again he was trying to make sense of Jesus' answer. He did not understand it's all about grace! That Position, honor, success, responsibility, who you know, what you have counts for nothing. It's all grace.

Three times Jesus hammered home the point: "You must be born again." Nicodemus' problem was not whether he desired to change or not -- that's the reason he came to Jesus -- wanting to know how he could receive eternal life. It was not desirability, but possibility, that was the question when he asked, "But how can it be -- how can one be born again?" The truth is Nicodemus would have been pleased if Jesus had given him a list of things to do, ways to act, laws to keep. That was the way the Pharisees understood a proper relationship with God.

Nicodemus didn't understand grace. So he asked, "How can it happen?" And Jesus responded, "The wind blows where it wills, and you can't see it, but you feel it and you see the sign of it, so is the person who is born of the Spirit." The new birth is not something that we orchestrate. It has nothing to do with rules or commandments, or worthiness, or works. It comes like a birth that we have no control over; like water that cleanses us, like wind that refreshes us -- wind that's felt but not seen. Its grace, Jesus is saying, and that's what we all have a problem with.

One of his most signal words was recorded in II Corinthians 5: 17: *"If any person is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away; behold, the new is come."* All through the New Testament, the notion of rebirth, being born again, re-creation occurs. The most important thing in the world to know is that Christ has given us new life...that our salvation is not our doing, but God's grace. We Must Be Born Again!

Bishop Will Willimon stated, *"We are so preoccupied with the need to make a decision for Christ that we forget that in Christ God has once and for all made a decision for us! We can do little to add or to improve upon God's acceptance of us in Christ, except to say "Yes!" to it and enjoy it."* We can't rationalize that -- we have to just accept it and say YES to it.