

Peace be with you, listening friends. We greet you in the name of God, the Lord of peace, who wants everyone to understand and submit to the way of righteousness that He has established, and have true peace with Him forever. We are happy to be able to return today to present your program *The Way of Righteousness*.

In our study in the holy Gospel, also known as the *Injil*, we have seen that Jesus the Messiah was unique in **His birth**, in **His character**, and in **His works**. And in our previous program, we recognized that Jesus was unique in **His teaching**. Never has there been another who has spoken such clear and profound words as He. Those who heard Him were astonished, because He taught them with an authority which their priests – their wisemen - and teachers of the law did not have. A few words from the mouth of Jesus were of greater value than a multitude of words from their religious leaders. Because of this, most of the leaders of the Jews were not pleased with Jesus. Not only did He teach that which **contradicted their traditions**, but He also **exposed their hypocrisy** before all!

In our previous lesson we heard Jesus' sermon which He taught while up on a mountain with His disciples. His sermon can be summarized with six words. Those six words are these: *"Do not be like the hypocrites!"* Hypocrisy is repulsive to God and destructive to man. That is why Jesus said to the crowd, *"Do not be like the hypocrites!"* You know what it means to be a hypocrite. If someone pretends to be someone or something that is not consistent with what is in his heart, he is a hypocrite. He is lying. Jesus said that a hypocrite is like a whitewashed tomb; beautiful on the outside but full of uncleanness on the inside.

No one can deceive God. The Word of God says: *"Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."* Jesus, who knew the heart of man, saw the hypocrisy that was in the religious leaders, the Pharisees and the

teachers of the law. On the outside they were zealous in praying, fasting, and giving money to the poor, but in their hearts they really did not love God and His Word. Consequently, all their "righteous" deeds and rituals were worthless. Thus, **Jesus taught His disciples, saying:**

*"And when you **pray**, do not be like the **hypocrites**, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." "When you **give** to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the **hypocrites** do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." "When you **fast**, do not look somber as the **hypocrites** do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full."*

*"**Do not be like the hypocrites.** For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they will be filled. Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they will see God. Be **perfect**, therefore, as [God] your heavenly Father is perfect!" "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and **many** enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a **few** find it."*

Thus the Lord Jesus exhorted the people to choose the narrow way that leads to eternal life. Did you grasp what Jesus said concerning the way of salvation? It is extremely important! What must a person be like if he (or she) is ever to see God, and live in God's presence forever? What did Jesus say about this? In short, He said: "**You must have a pure and perfect heart!**"

But how can a child of Adam who was conceived in sin have a pure and perfect heart? Is there something he can do to cause his evil heart to be transformed into the pure heart that God requires? No! Man, by himself, has no means of purifying his heart. There's an old African proverb that says: "Even if a log soaks a long time in water it will never be transformed into a crocodile." Similarly, we sinners cannot **do** anything to **make ourselves** pure before God. However, in the remaining time today, we will see that **what is impossible for man is possible for God!**

Now let us continue reading in the Gospel to see how a certain religious ruler from Jerusalem by the name of **Nicodemus** came to talk with Jesus at night. Jesus showed him how a sinner can receive a pure heart and God's gift of eternal life. We are reading in the Gospel of John, chapter three. The Scripture says:

*Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." In reply Jesus declared, **"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."***

*"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, **"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is 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!'**** The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."*

"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and

*we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man [that is, the Messiah]. **Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**"*

Let us think a little about what the Lord Jesus told the religious ruler, Nicodemus. **What did Jesus tell Nicodemus must happen before he could have eternal life and the right to live with God forever?** He said, *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. **You must be born again!**"* Did Nicodemus know what it meant to be born again? No! That is why Jesus said to him, *"You are Israel's teacher, and do you not understand these things? **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!'**"*

Jesus was telling Nicodemus that anyone who wants to see God and live in His holy presence throughout eternity **must be born twice!** That does not mean that you must enter a second time into your mother's womb and be born again physically. Being born again means that **the Spirit of God must remake you**, washing your heart and renewing you by His power. You must be born by **the power that comes from heaven**, which is **completely different from the outward form of religion**. You must be changed on the **inside**--in your **heart!** Whoever is born of Adam is stained with sin and cannot have a part in the Kingdom of God. The children of Adam are powerless to remove the root of sin that grows in their hearts. As the proverb told us, just as spending a long time in water does not transform a log into a crocodile, so also spending time performing religious rituals and doing good deeds can never make an

evil heart pure. God Himself must work a miracle in your heart and He must renew it, because that which is perishable cannot inherit that which is imperishable! In short, *"You must be born again!"*

That is what Jesus taught the religious ruler, Nicodemus. But Nicodemus had difficulty understanding this. Thus, he asked Jesus: How can this be? **How** can I be born again and receive a new and pure heart?

Jesus answered him,

*"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that **everyone who believes in him** may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever believes in him** shall not perish but have eternal life."*

To show Nicodemus how he could escape the judgment of hell and receive eternal life, Jesus reminded him what had happened to his ancestors in the wilderness in the time of the prophet Moses. As we saw in the Torah, once when the children of Israel complained against God and Moses, God sent poisonous snakes among them to bite them so that many died. However, after the children of Israel repented, God commanded Moses to make a **bronze snake and suspend it on a pole**, so that **everyone who looked at it would be healed** and not die.

Thus, Jesus was telling Nicodemus that just as the children of Israel had only to look in faith at the bronze snake on the pole to be saved from death, so the children of Adam only have **to believe** in the remedy that God has provided to save them from eternal punishment. **We** are all like the children of Israel who were bitten by the snakes. **Satan** is like a poisonous snake, and **sin** is like the poison, which causes man to perish. Satan has bitten all the children of Adam, and the poison of sin will cause us

to perish in hell forever if God does not give us a remedy! We have no possible means of saving ourselves from God's judgment, because the wages of sin is death and hell. But praise be to the Lord God--for just as He provided a remedy to save the children of Israel from the poison of the snakes--so also He has provided **a remedy** to save the children of Adam from "the poison" of sin.

Do you know God's plan to restore and renew the hearts of the children of Adam, which are filled with sin? What did the Lord Jesus say about this? He said that the holy Redeemer must be lifted up on a pole – the cross - in order to endure the penalty of sin for sinners--*"that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life...and not perish!"*

Who then can be saved? What does the Scripture say? It says: **"Everyone who believes in Him...shall not perish!"** In whom must we believe? We must believe in the Redeemer whom God has sent. Do you believe in Him? Do you believe in your heart that God, who does not want anyone to perish, sent Jesus the Savior down to earth for **you**, to bear **for you** your debt of sin? God's righteous remedy for our problem of sin is Jesus' death on the cross. The Scripture says: ***"God made [Jesus the Messiah]who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."***

God has not changed. What the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus about two thousand years ago, He still says to you today: *"You must be born again!"* God wants to cleanse and remake your heart and renew you by His power. However, you must believe His Good News. You must believe in the Messiah whom He sent. You must believe that Jesus, who never sinned, paid for your debt of sin, so that you can live in the presence of God forever. *"You must be born again!...No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again!"* Amen.

Thank you for listening. In the next study, God willing, we will continue in the Gospel and hear a conversation the Lord Jesus had with a woman who had five husbands....

God bless you as you ponder what Jesus the Messiah declared, saying,

"You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again!'" "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God!"

If you would like more information about *The Way of Righteousness*, please visit the website: one-god-one-message.com

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