

A. The expression "born again" has become very popular today. Several books are out now on the subject. The Lord Jesus Christ introduced this expression "born again" in John 3. He was talking to a religious man one night by the name of Nicodemus. This man apparently wanted to talk religion, especially about building the kingdom of heaven here on earth, but Jesus interrupted him to say to him, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nicodemus was startled. He thought that Jesus was talking about a second physical birth. Well, you can't have a second physical birth, which is quite obvious, and you cannot have a second spiritual birth either. When you are born again, you are regenerated by the Spirit of God, you are given a new nature that has a capacity for God. Though it may not have the power, it does have the capacity for God and longs for Him and will not be happy except to be in the Father's house. This new nature never leaves you because you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. It becomes as vital a part of you as your old nature. At the new birth you get a new nature, but you do not lose your old nature. You have these two natures contending for priority in your life. This was the struggle Paul went through, and all of us do also.

This new birth also means that the Holy Spirit baptizes you into the body of believers; that is, He puts you into the body of believers. It is an organic union of all believers who are brought together into one body, and that one body is called in Scripture *the church*. You cannot be born again two times; but if you have been born again one time, you are still a child of God, though you may be living in the old nature and be far from God.

Q. I thought I was born again when I was fifteen years old. I felt happy and secure in Christ. But over time, sin surely crept in, and I went the downward path. Three marriages, adultery, lies, drinking. Was I born again? What do I do now?

A. It doesn't make any difference how far you have wandered. You can always come home. The illustration the Lord Jesus used in Luke 15:11-24 was the prodigal son. You are the prodigal daughter, but you are in the same position. Now, that boy in the far country was still the son of the father, even when he got down in the pigpen (he couldn't have gotten any lower than that). He was still a son of the father and because of that he had the nature of the father, and he wanted to go back home. Well, he made a decision to go back.

The very fact that you are disturbed indicates to me that, when you say you were born again at fifteen, you are accurate. That really happened or you wouldn't want to get back into fellowship with God today. I think the average unregenerate sinner wants to keep on going into sin. He lives in it. He loves it. Pigs love pigpens; sons are never satisfied to stay there. The day will come when they are going to have to say, "I will arise and go to my Father."

Q. A person in our church who holds a very responsible position declares we are saved by love instead of grace, as stated in Ephesians 2:8; and also, that "according to His mercy He has saved us." He says mercy is the undeserved love of God. He also quotes Romans 8:24 and says we are saved by hope. Is there anything anywhere that says we are saved by love?

A. God couldn't extend mercy just because He loved—not to sinners such as we are.

One of the teachings that is going the rounds today is an overemphasis on the love of God. One of the reasons that some preachers and some radio programs today are so popular is simply because of their emphasis on love—nothing negative is given. We have a preacher here in Southern California who claims he never says anything negative; everything is positive. Well, if you go through the Bible, you will find that there is a great deal that is negative. For example,