

LIVING PROOF (Message 2): The Jesus Mandate

THE JESUS MANDATE: The Only Solution to the Problem of Mankind

In the first message of this series, we examined three questions Jesus asked His disciples then and asks us now:

- Who do you say that I am?
- Why do you call me Lord and do not do what I command you?
- Do you love Me?

Hopefully you have your answers clearly implanted on your heart and in your mind such that your life is "LIVING PROOF".

Today we get back to the basics of Christianity in what I refer to as The Jesus Mandate. It solves the ONE problem that created the uncrossable chasm, impenetrable fortress, and unfathomable depth of time and space that exists between God and man—SIN. If you consider yourself a Christian or have any familiarity with the Bible and the story of mankind, you know its origin. We often refer to it as the "Genesis 3 world". I taught on this in the recent series, *The Origin of Evil*. I refer you to that.

This mandate is perhaps the most unusual statement Jesus ever made. It seems to be an answer to a question that was not asked. We find it in a rather unusual conversation between Jesus, early in His ministry, and one of the most highly regarded Pharisees, Nicodemus. We read it in John 3. Following is a summary.

Nicodemus came to Jesus in the night because he was afraid to be seen with Him in the daylight. Jesus was increasingly popular with the people because of His miracles, compassion

for the lowly people oppressed by the Romans and some religious Jews. He was viewed with great suspicion by the religious leaders. Later they would grow to hate, despise, and desire His death.

THE MANDATE:

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only

*begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. "This is the judgment, that the **Light** has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. "But he who **practices the truth** comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."*

Jesus equated *born again* with receiving/believing in Him (His name). People who are born again experience this as moving from darkness into Light. He describes their after-behavior as *practicing the truth*. The two-fold question for you today is do you understand Jesus' mandate and

Are you

born again in Christ?

Next week we will dive into what Jesus considers "practicing the truth" – the evidences that we are truly born again. I close with one of the great verses of hope given by the Apostle Peter in the first of his marvelous epistles.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Peter 1:3

For Christ's sake,

Walter