

born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." You have greater privileges than those who live in heathen lands, but if you despise them or abuse them, in the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for the heathen than for you. Nicodemus, though he lived in the land where the true religion was professed, where the ordinances of Divine Worship were observed, though he was a professor and a teacher of religion, needed to be born again. "Ye must be born again."

Nothing can be a substitute for the new birth. A good reputation and respectability of character cannot be a substitute for it. It is chiefly, though not exclusively, because you are all wrong with respect to God, because you do not love God, because you prefer to him something infinitely inferior to him, that you need to be born again.

Neither will a profession of religion do instead of the new birth. To profess religion, while you do not possess it, and you do not possess it, unless you are born again—is to profess a falsehood and to live a lie. You will never have religion till you love God; and you should have it before you profess to have it. This being the case, a profession of religion will never do instead of being born again. The form of religion cannot be a substitute for the power of religion.

Perhaps you may not love this doctrine, because it assumes that you are bad. But does it not accord with the testimony of your own conscience? You know that you have not loved God supremely all along. O then do not kick at this truth. Admit your sinfulness, and the necessity of being born again. 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.' Prov. xxviii, 13.

But how are you to be brought to experience this change? The Spirit of love is undoubtedly the great superintending agent in the production of it. Jesus speaks of being "born of the Spirit." But does the Holy Spirit produce the new birth by direct irresistible power, or by moral influence poured on the soul through the truth of the gospel? If the Spirit change the heart by direct irresistible power, then it is no more *our* duty to be created anew in Christ Jesus, than it was the duty of man to create himself. To maintain that irresistible power is necessary to produce the new birth is to remove it from the sphere of human duty; and the effect of such a doctrine on the sinner must be either to drive him to despair or to confirm him in carelessness.