The New Birth BY Malusi Skunyana

Read John 3:3

JOHN 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

In order to enter the kingdom of God one needs to be born again. This rebirth means death to sin and resurrection into a new life – a life of living for God. The repentant sinner, having received forgiveness for his sins, is now given an opportunity to start over on a clean slate. God Himself initiates the process of total transformation of the character of the newly born believer, and He implants His character in the believer.

In John 3:1-21 Jesus explains the fundamentals of the Christian faith to Nicodemus, and one of the fundamentals He dealt with was new birth. Nicodemus had come to Jesus by night to inquire about what one needed to do to enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus must have believed in common with other Jews that one needed to do some kind of good deed in order to earn a place in the kingdom of God. But Jesus introduced what seemed like a strange doctrine to Nicodemus. It is not by some kind of external act that one may gain a place in the kingdom of God, but one needs a spiritual rebirth to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus’ message was that a person needed to die to a life of sin and to be resurrected into a new life – a spiritual life. Clearly, this process could only be brought about by God’s Spirit resulting in a change of heart and transformation of character.

When Nicodemus seemed not to understand what Jesus meant by being “born again,” Jesus clarified that by stating that one needed to be “born of water and the Spirit” to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus was clearly referring to baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Baptism signifies death to sin and resurrection to new life. To be born of the Spirit means to begin a new life with God. In this experience, one is no longer a slave to sin, but is a child of God no longer living to please himself but God. Jesus explained that the process of rebirth is mysterious like the blowing of the wind. It is so because it is initiated and accomplished by God Himself. No one can change his heart; no one can lead himself to repentance; no one can transform his character on his own: this is something that only God can do for the believer who accepts Jesus as His personal Saviour and commits his life to Jesus.

In the plan of salvation, God has designed a mechanism of transforming a sinner into a child of God. When a sinner repents from a life of sin, God forgives his sins and starts him on a journey that will change his heart and totally transform his character such that he will reflect the character of God. In this wonderful system, God gives the sinner a second chance in life regardless of how bad are the crimes he committed before he gave his life to God. God’s invitation to start a new life with Him is extended to everyone, but it is only those who feel their need of God and accept His plan for their lives that receive the benefits of God’s grace and experience the new birth.

Dear friend, God has made it possible for everyone to be saved, but it is only those who truly respond to God’s gift of grace that will be saved. No one is so bad such that God cannot do anything for him, for God’s grace is sufficient to save even the worst sinner. Even if people may have given up on you, but God will never give up on you, He will continue to reach out to you because of His mercy. It does not matter how dark your past is, God is giving you an opportunity to start a new life with Him today. Will you allow God to transform your life? May God lead you to a new life with Him! Amen!