

“Only one will not do...How many have you?”

By: Keith Keyser

Today, February 9th, is the birthday of notable historical figures such as the 9th President of the United States, William Henry Harrison, and the 18th century philosopher and political agitator – not to mention inveterate infidel – Thomas Paine. Contemporary figures such as Senator Jim Webb of Virginia, the diminutive actor Joe Pesci, and the actress Mia Farrow were also born on this date. More pertinent to my situation: 38 years ago today I was born in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, USA. This birth was somewhat surprising because I arrived 3 months early (I’ve always been partial to dramatic entrances!) The local doctors looked at this scrawny baby who weighed a mere 2 pounds 7 ounces and opined that I only had a 30% chance of surviving. Happily, there is a God who rules over all and determines the times appointed for men. Thus, in His sovereign mercy He spared my life.

A Mother’s Faith & A Faithful God

Although premature and suffering from cerebral palsy – which would go undiagnosed until I was nearly two – I enjoyed many blessings. My chief advantage was to be born into a household where the parents were devout Christians who had a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and knew the value of intercessory prayer. Anyone who has met my parents knows that my father is louder, larger, and much more forceful than my mother. Nonetheless, in the early moments of my life it was my faithful Christian mother who offered a “Hannah prayer” to the Lord. Those unfamiliar with this great woman of faith, Hannah, can consult 1 Samuel chapters 1 and 2. Hannah prayed that the Lord would give her a son so that she could give him back to the Almighty for His service. Similarly, my mother said, “Lord if you spare the boy’s life, I’ll give him back to You for Your work”. I did not learn of this prayer for many years. It was only after I began preaching and teaching from the Word of God that she told me of her “bargain” with the Lord. In His grace, He honored that prayer and I have now been preaching His Word for over 20 years, spending nearly 12 of those in full time service for His glory.

Of course, my second birthday occurred 7 years after my first. Thanks to the faithful witness of my parents as well as countless sermons heard in our local church, I was well-acquainted with the story of the Lord Jesus Christ. I knew that there is a God who sent His Son into the world to die on the cross for sinners (1 Tim. 1:15.) I also knew that not having the Son of God as my Savior left me in the dreadful state of being under the righteous condemnation of God for my sins (John 3:36.) As a boy of 7, alone on my cousin’s porch, I simply asked the Lord to save me based on what His Word said: that His Son died for me and rose again so that I could be given eternal life. John 3 famously describes the conversion experience as being “born again”. It could also be translated “born anew” or “born from above”. 2 Corinthians 5:17 assures us that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. On that summer’s day I passed from a state of spiritual

death – that is alienation from God and His life – to a state of spiritual life – knowing God through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:24; John 17:3.)

Happy Birthday To Me (Twice)

So on this day, my 38th birthday, I give thanks to God for His mercy and grace towards me: for allowing me to receive the Lord Jesus as my Savior and serve Him throughout my adolescence and adult life. In my local church when someone has a birthday, we often sing a second verse to the well-known birthday chorus; the lyrics are as follows:

Happy birthday to you, only one will not do!

Born again means salvation, how many have you?

I am so thankful to write that I have 2 birthdays. The natural one on February 9th, and the spiritual one on a specific day whose date I have forgotten from the summer of 1980. Nonetheless, Christ lives within me and I live in Him (Col. 1:27; Rom. 8:1.) If you cannot say that you have two, I urge you to read John 3 and consider where you stand with the Lord. If you are to be saved from your sin and gain eternal life, you must receive the Lord Jesus Christ or to put it as He did, “you must be born again” (John 3:7.)