

The New Birth - Part 1

by Derek Prince

Derek Prince's sermon emphasizes the necessity of being born again through faith in Jesus Christ for eternal life.

Duration: 29:00

Scripture: John 3:1

Topics: "New Birth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a personal experience of a woman who had a profound encounter with God. The woman was moved to tears and felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. The preacher explains that receiving Jesus Christ is the key to experiencing the new birth and having assurance of eternal life. He emphasizes the importance of believing in the record that God gives in the Gospel and the New Testament about Jesus Christ. The preacher also shares an anecdote about discussing the concept of being born again with a woman who had never heard of it before. He compares the act of receiving Jesus to the wind, explaining that although it cannot be seen, its effects can be felt and observed.

Transcript

This is tape number 2013. Derek Prince speaking on salvation and healing. Message number 13 entitled, The New Birth.

In our study today we're going to deal with the tremendous spiritual experience which is revealed in the New Testament. This experience is called being born again or sometimes it's called regeneration which is just one longer word meaning the same thing. For an introductory scripture passage we're going to turn to John's Gospel chapter 3 and read the first eight verses of this third chapter of John's Gospel.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi we know that thou art a teacher come from God for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him. 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.

Nicodemus saith unto him how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered verily, verily, I say unto thee except a man be born of water and of 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. Marvel not that I said unto thee ye must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the spirit. Three times in those verses Jesus emphasizes this experience the new birth, being born again.

He says except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. He cannot enter the kingdom of God. And then marvel not that I said unto thee ye must be born again.

I believe that it's part of the inspiration of scripture that this conversation of Jesus as it's recorded here took place with Nicodemus. Because if ever there was a good man whose religion and position in the world might have guaranteed him a place in heaven that man was Nicodemus. He was a religious man, he was a Pharisee.

He was a well-educated man, he was a teacher. He had a high social position, he was a ruler. And he was a member of a race that had been set apart by God to bless the world, the Jewish race.

So he was religious, educated, of high social position, a Jew by birth. And yet it was to this very man that Jesus emphasized the necessity of the new birth. Now Jesus uses and the scripture uses a number of different phrases.

Also the English translation is not entirely clear. The word that's translated again means literally from above. And it is elsewhere used in the New Testament to mean from the beginning.

And elsewhere we have the phrase born of the spirit. If we put these phrases together we get a kind of picture. Born again on the second time, a second birth.

Born anew, a new start. Born from above, something that comes down from heaven. Born and born of the spirit.

A spiritual birth or a spiritual experience. So we're talking about something which corresponds to those four phrases. Born again, born anew, born from above, born of the spirit.

Jesus said this is essential. There is no way to heaven but by the new birth. Now Nicodemus in spite of all his qualifications absolutely could not understand what Jesus was talking about.

He said, how can a man be born again? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? He was thinking in terms of a natural birth. Going back into his mother's womb. Jesus said that was a birth of the flesh and it produced flesh.

But he said what I'm talking about now is a birth of the spirit and the result of it is spiritual. And he made this distinction, that which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the spirit is spirit.

And then he made this emphasis, he must be born again. And then in order to help Nicodemus to understand what he was speaking about, he gave him an example from natural things. He said, the wind, you don't see the wind.

No one has ever seen the wind. Now in Greek, the word wind is also the word for breath. The word for spirit, pneuma, can be translated wind, breath or spirit.

So when Jesus speaks about the wind, he's using the wind as the pattern or picture in nature of the Holy Spirit. He says the wind blows where it listed. No one can control the wind.

No one can tell the wind to blow here or there. And you can't see the wind, but you can hear the sound. And when it comes, you don't know where it's coming from.

You don't know where it's going to. But when the wind blows, there are evidences that the wind is blowing. You walk outside on a windy day, you look up at the sky, the clouds are all scattering across the sky in one direction.

The trees are all bent in one direction. Their leaves are shaking. The leaves come off.

They're blown in one direction. There's dust in the streets, it's blown up. Everything indicates, wherever you look, the wind is at work.

You cannot see the wind itself, but you can see the results that the wind produces. Now Jesus said, so is everyone that is born of the Spirit. The Spirit himself is invisible.

You cannot confine him. You cannot make him work by your rules. He doesn't obey religious rules.

But when he's at work, you can see the evidence. You don't see the Spirit, but you see the Spirit's evidence. The things that he does are the evidence that he's at work.

Let's bear that in mind. And a little later on, we'll see more clearly the kind of evidence. Now, since this experience is essential, and Jesus, the very author and founder of the Christian faith, declares emphatically that no one can see or enter heaven apart from this experience.

If we claim to be Christians, or if we take the teachings of Jesus seriously, it is obviously of the greatest importance that we ask ourselves, how can a man be born again? What is it necessary to do in order to be born again, born from above, born anew, born of the Spirit? I have met hundreds and hundreds of church members and professing Christians who could not give any kind of intelligent answer to that question. How can a person be born again? For the answer of Scripture, I want to take you back in John's Gospel to the first chapter, and to read verses 11, 12, and 13 of John chapter one. Speaking about Jesus, the 11th verse says, he came unto his own and his own received him not.

I believe his own means the Jewish nation. He came as a Jew, born as a Jew, brought up as a Jew, fulfilling the law as a Jew, to his own nation, and nationally, as a nation, they did not receive him. So the next verse brings it down to the individual level, the individual response.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power, but a better translation is authority to become the children of God, even to those that believe on his name. Verse 13 sums up the result of verse 12. Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Now, if you miss out the middle sections of verse 13, you have this statement that these people were born of God. And that gives us one more phrase that we can put down here, born of God. God.

So we have now five different ways of describing one and the same experience. Born again, born anew, born from above, born of the Spirit, born of God. But the great thing about these verses in John 1, verses 12 and 13, is that they give us the key.

What is it that a person has to do in order to receive this new birth, to be born of God? Verse 12 tells us this, many as received him, Jesus Christ, to them he gave authority, the privilege, the opportunity to become the children of God. And this is a faith transaction. It's through believing in his name.

The result is they were born of God. What is the key action which makes a person a child of God? What is it that brings the new birth to a person's life? And the answer is very clear, very simple, very important. It's receiving him, Jesus Christ.

And I find today that there are thousands and thousands and thousands of church members who lay claim to the title of Christian, who do not know what it is to receive him, Jesus Christ, by personal experience. And indeed, for many years, I was in that category myself. I was brought up in the State Church of Britain, christened as a baby, confirmed, went to church regularly every day for many years, at school and at college, repeated the creed, said the prayers, even read the lessons in church.

But I had never received him, Jesus Christ. I had tried to be a Christian and failed miserably. The harder I tried, the worse I failed.

Let me tell you this, you cannot be a Christian by trying. Trying will not do it. In the end, my failure was so complete that I gave the whole thing up and decided that Christianity was not for me.

Now, I knew about Jesus. Intellectually, I believed about Jesus. But experientially, there was one thing missing.

I had never personally received Jesus. Receiving Jesus is not a sacrament. It's not an ordinance.

It's a direct personal transaction between Christ and the person. And it's this one transaction that brings about the new birth. As many as received him were born of God.

Only those that received him, no one else. But all those that received him were born of God. Now, the apostle John eliminates certain other possibilities.

He says certain things that it is not. And it's worthwhile looking rather carefully at that. It's not of blood.

In other words, it's not of natural physical descent. Your parents cannot make you Christians. Your parents may be the best Christians in the world.

But it's not transmitted from parent to child by natural inheritance. It's not of blood. Secondly, it's not of the will of the flesh.

It's not the result of some carnal appetite or desire. It's no expression of fleshly desire. It's not the satisfaction of a fleshly desire.

And thirdly, it's not of the will of man. It's not by human willpower. You cannot become a Christian by exercising your will to do what God requires.

To be good, to keep the commandments, to go to church. The exercise of human will does not produce the result. There is only one way that this can be experienced.

And it is by receiving him, Jesus Christ. It is a personal transaction between the person and Jesus Christ. And when a person opens his heart, by faith, to Jesus Christ and invites Christ to come in and to take control of his life and accepts the Lordship of Jesus Christ over his life.

Then the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, brings to effect the new birth. The wind blows. I will always remember years back in London, England when I was pastoring a congregation there.

A young lady came over from Denmark. My wife is a Dane by birth and we had quite a number of people from Denmark who came to visit us in our home. This young lady was a good Danish Lutheran, a member of the Lutheran State Church of Denmark and a virtuous moral woman.

She knew nothing whatever about the new birth. And one day we began to speak about the new birth and she opened her eyes wide and I could see interest arising within her. And she said, well I've never heard about this, no one ever taught me about this.

She said, how can a person be born again? And I began to explain to her the teaching of Jesus in John chapter 3 and then here in John chapter 1 about the act of personally receiving Jesus. And I said it's something that you can't see, but when you do it, the Spirit of God comes into your life and it's like the wind. You can't see the wind, but you can see the results that the wind produces.

You can't see the Spirit, but you can see and feel the results that the Spirit produces. Then you know the Spirit is at work. So I said to her very blankly and clearly, I said, do you want to be born again? And she said, yes I do.

So I gave her as much detailed instruction as I could, brought her to the point of clear understanding of the Word of God and a willingness to act upon it. I said, would you kneel down with me, it was in our living room, and say this short simple prayer after me. And I led her in a prayer addressed to Jesus Christ, confessing her sin, professing her faith in the death of Jesus on the cross in behalf of her sin.

And then specifically and personally inviting Jesus to come into our heart and life. She said the prayer and said amen. We sat up in two chairs in the living room.

And the Danes by and large are rather unemotional people. They don't easily yield to emotion. We sat there and looked at one another.

And as I looked at her, two large tears formed in her eyes and trickled down her cheeks. She was a little embarrassed. She reached in her purse, got out her handkerchief, mopped up the tears.

And before she could finish the job, there were two more. So she looked at me in an embarrassed way and she said, I don't know why I'm crying. She said, I never usually cry.

And I said, I can tell you why you're crying. The wind has started to blow. The Spirit is at work.

He's touched something in you that never has been touched before. And that's just your natural response to the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart. Well that woman had a beautiful experience with God in a very quiet way without a lot of drama.

Her life was completely changed and she became a real child of God. So this is the key that unlocks the door of the new birth. It's receiving Him, Jesus.

When you receive Him, then He gives you the authority. He places within you that which, if you act upon it, will enable you to become a child of God. And you are born of God.

Not of blood, not of natural inheritance, not of the will of the flesh, not of some carnal urge or desire, and not of human willpower. But by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Born of God, born of the Spirit, born anew, born from above, born again.

Now thereafter, you are a Christian. In the New Testament sense, you have eternal life. The whole of the message of John, concerning this, is so clear and simple.

Let's turn from the Gospel of John, to the first epistle of John. The first epistle of John, chapter 5, verses 10, 11, 12 and 13. We'll read four verses there.

First John, chapter 5, verses 10, 11, 12 and 13. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself. When you believe on the Son of God, Jesus Christ, in the way that the New Testament speaks about, you have an inner witness.

You know it's real. You know that God is there. You know that it's happened.

But he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. The only thing that can keep you from this, is unbelief. If you refuse the record that God gives in the Gospel, and in the New Testament of his Son Jesus Christ, then you cannot receive this experience.

Now the record is stated very clearly in the next verse, the 11th verse. This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life. And this life, is in his Son.

Now there are various words in Greek for life. The word that's used here is Zoe, which gives us the English girl's name Zoe, Zoe. Now this word Zoe, is used in the Bible only of life that comes from God.

Divine life, eternal life. A life that a man does not have by nature. There are other words, we do not need to go into them, which are used for natural physical life.

But this word Zoe, speaks about divine, eternal life. This is the word that's used here. This is the record or testimony of God, that God hath given unto us eternal life, Zoe.

And this life, is in his Son. He that hath the Son, capital S, the Son of God, hath life, Zoe. Divine, eternal life.

And he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. There is the great division in the word of God, between the haves and the have-nots. The haves are those who have received Jesus Christ, have the Son of God, and in him have eternal life.

The have-nots are those who have not received Jesus Christ, do not have the Son of God, and do not have eternal life. And the whole world is divided into just those two categories. The haves and the have-nots.

The haves, those who have received Jesus Christ, who have the Son of God, and have eternal life. The have-nots, the others, those that have not received Jesus Christ, and have not eternal life. And then the scripture goes on to say in the thirteenth verse of the same fifth chapter of the first epistle of John, These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.

It's very interesting if you compare the gospel of John and the first epistle. John says he wrote his gospel, that those who believed it, those who read it, might believe on Jesus Christ, and might have eternal life. But the epistle takes us one stage further.

It's that not merely those who read it may believe and have eternal life, but that they may know that they have eternal life. And this is the will of God, that every believer has eternal life and knows it. I would like to make this a very personal question.

Do you have eternal life? And do you know that you have it? Now I am bold enough to say that I have eternal life, and I know that I have it. Because I have received Jesus Christ, and in him I have eternal life. Now you might say to me, well that's a very bold and presumptuous statement to make.

But I will answer, I'm bold and presumptuous to accept the record of God. This is the record that God hath given of his Son. He hath given us eternal life, he that hath the Son hath life.

Now if it be presumptuous to believe Almighty God, then I am presumptuous. But if you would not wish to accept what I say, let me suggest to you that you too could be considered presumptuous. For it says, he that believeth not God hath made him a liar.

To refuse the record that God gives of his Son Jesus Christ, is to call God a liar. Now if I have to choose, I would rather be presumptuous in accepting the record that God has given of his Son, than be presumptuous in rejecting God's record and making God a liar. To me, the height of presumption is to make Almighty God a liar by refusing the testimony that he's given of his Son Jesus Christ.

I thank God that I have received Jesus Christ. I have the Son of God Jesus Christ, and in him I have eternal life. My testimony agrees with the testimony of God.

And the scripture says here, he that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself. The witness of whom? The witness of the Holy Spirit. We turn to Romans the eighth chapter, and the sixteenth verse.

Paul says, the Spirit itself, beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. So, when by faith we receive Jesus Christ, in him we have eternal life, we become the children of God, and we have the witness of the Holy Spirit himself, who is the Spirit of truth, that we are the children of God. This is the new birth.

It's receiving Jesus Christ, receiving eternal life in him, knowing that you have eternal life, and having the witness of the Spirit to that effect. The result is strong assurance. It is a definite confidence that the destiny of your soul is settled.

It can be settled, because God has made it that way. God has made it possible, that we do not have merely to wish, or to hope, or to wonder, but we can know that we have eternal life. For many years, I used to preach regularly in the streets of the city of London.

And I gathered a very motley group of people, who stood and listened to me. And afterwards, when I'd finished, I would stop and talk to some of the people. And if they had shown obvious interest, I would usually ask them this question.

Are you a Christian? And I would get a variety of answers. After a while, I could almost predict the answers that I would get. They would be something like this.

If I would say, Are you a Christian? They would say, Well, I hope so, or I think so, or I don't know, or I try to be. And I would tease them a little bit, and I would say, Isn't that strange, that you don't know, or you only try to be, or you only hope, or you only think. I would say, Suppose I'd asked you another question.

Suppose I'd said, Are you married? Would you say, I hope so, or I think so, or I try to be, or I don't know? Of course, they would say no. Well, I said, How is it that you can know that you're married, but apparently you don't know that you're a Christian? And I would bring them, of course, face to face with this fact that marriage is entered into by a direct personal transaction between two persons. It's a personal relationship that's entered into and established.

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