

# Labouring for the Lord

by G.W. North

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## Transcript

I suppose you're happy that the storm didn't keep on all night. How many of you got wet? Oh, I met a young man who had distinct forebodings about whether his ground sheet would be dry or not when he got there. I could afford to laugh because I don't use one.

Comforted him with, this is one of the joys of camping. Well, praise the Lord. Shall we stand up and praise him? Oh, let's go together, shall we? I love you, Lord, with all my heart, and we love, and we love.

These reverts must be wonderful. These people come together and say, oh Lord, we love you. Because you know he loves you.

It's only reciprocal. I love thee, Lord, used to seeing, yet tis no love of mine that flows back to that great heart of thine. Tis thine own love which thou hast given me, returning back, O Lord, again to thee.

Don't you think that's nice? We ought to have a hymn book as big as this, that we could get all these lovely gems of truth in them. But still, we'll sing this. It's quite modern.

I love thee, Lord, with all my heart, and we love, and we love. Amen. I'll be there, amen.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Somebody went down. For when, you don't go when.

All right? When, when, when, you're on the same note. Shall I sing it to you again? Yeah, you're catching me, aren't you? I'm being set up all the time. He sets me up.

Ready? I'll be there, I'll be there, when the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there. I'll be there, I'll be there, when the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there. All right.

Eh? I'm just checking the music to make sure you're right. Well, listen, sometimes the music isn't put down right. Why do people fiddle about with tunes? When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there, when the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.

Amen. Praise the name of the Lord. I always remember one glorious passage from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

When at last he came and he said to the man that was writing, set my name down. Hallelujah. Set my name down.

Glory be to the name of the Lord. Is your name in the Lamb's book of life? How do you know? How do you know it's there? Because when it's written there, the name of Jesus is written on your heart. You can call that a figure of speech if you like, but you know what I mean.

When that's there, glory. And I've become a Jesus person, because I've been born again. And I've been born a Jesus person.

Hallelujah. Well, obviously you can't get that except you're born. You've got to be born to inherit that name.

Jesus inherited a more wonderful name than any of the angels. And so have you, if you've been born of God, you've become a Jesus person. Hallelujah.

This is what it's about. It's not something you believe, it's something that happens to you. And changes you.

And everybody can see you are changed. It's so obvious that really you don't have to tell the people that know you, but you have to tell all the others that don't. And there are more of those than those that do.

Isn't it wonderful? Let us labour for the Master. Not just attend meetings. Oh, thank you for coming.

Keep coming, that's not a problem. But don't just attend meetings. Labour for the Master.

Labour. Listen. Hard labour.

Listen. From the dawn to setting sun. Oh, I suppose to do that, I'd go to the office at nine o'clock.

Oh, that's the mentality being brought up into it. Labour for the Master from the dawn to setting sun. That's what the old Salvationists used to do.

Whether they do now, I don't know. It's wonderful, isn't it? Lord, I'm going to work for you. I'm going to work for you.

As I said, hands up every one of you who really work for the Lord. I didn't say work for Salvation. Whether you really work for the Lord.

No, I know you can come up and say, well, they're all different kinds of works. Which one do you mean? Because you're looking for a tree to hide behind, old Adam. That's what you're looking for, somewhere to hide.

I'm going to work for you, Lord. Do you know what God would really love? Everybody in this tent sometime for the weekend, weeks out, to volunteer to work for the Lord. And then not go home and forget about it and settle into the same old rut.

Forgetting that the grave is only deeper than a rut. Just a little deeper. Have you seen some of the ruts I've seen? That's right.

You're going to labour. You're going to work. You're going to sweat.

You're going to toil. You're going to weep. You're going to soil your hands.

You're going to get out there where it's dirty and hard. You're not going to settle back into that same old humdrum thing of getting up and going to the meeting on Sunday morning, and I don't know what, and retiring for the rest of the week or something. You're going to work.

You know, Jesus was so concerned about this, he said to his disciples, he said, Now you pray, he said. You pray, and I'll tell you what to pray for. Don't say, Our Father.

Pray that the Lord of the harvest will thrust forth labourers. No, no, no distrust. Unwilling ones, you see.

Go on. Go on. Thrust them out.

Oh, come on. You see, you see, that's done so much. He always said, Follow me, and he'd lead, you see.

Follow me. And written many books written on discipleship. Yeah.

Go on, now you pray. Everything's changed. There's a build-up of truth.

You start following. Mind you, if you do, the first thing he'll say to you is, What are you looking for? What are you seeking? What do you want? What do you want? That's what he'll say. Then if you keep following, he'll say, Look, I was expecting you to work.

He said, You know, nobody told me this. I thought it was sort of all being happy in the happy land. You know, I hear thee speak of a happy land.

And so on. Do you know that one? Well, I won't sing that to you. No.

Thou call'st its children a happy man. And so on. Yes, that's right.

Trying to allure them onto the ground of being happy and all that, you see. But let me testify to you that it's work. W-O-R-K.

And it's work. And it's work. And it's work.

Did you know that? And I'll tell you this. That it is as you labour and work that you will get strong, and you will get built up, and you won't sit there envying others saying, Oh, I wish I was like him, or I wish I was like her. I wish I could do... Did you know how that great man Dwight L. Moody got started? Do you know? He got saved.

I'm not going to preach, Norman, really I'm not. He got saved in Chicago. And he hadn't been saved long, being the man he was, that he volunteered.

He said, I want to be a teacher in the Sunday school. All right. So the pastor said, well, thank you very much, but we've got a crowd in Sunday school, and we've got quite sufficient teachers, thank you.

So he kept pestering, he said, I want to serve the Lord, I want to teach in Sunday school. So the man said, all right, you go out in the street and collect the children, and bring them in, and you can teach them. And that's what he did.

He went out and collected the children, and his name wasn't the Pied Piper. He collected the children, and he got started. That's how this great man Moody started.

And he ceased to be a man of moods. He lived in constancy. He came to England to convert thousands and thousands to the Lord, in England, and in other parts of the world.

But you don't suddenly become a famous evangelist. You start by working, working, doing the donkey work. Sometimes feeling you've been kicked in the face for doing it.

But that's how you start. Let me tell you this, everybody in churches is not a gentleman, or a lady. You won't get treated as though you were the queen, or the king, or perhaps you will, the king who was crowned with thorns.

The whole glorious concept is this, that you go and work, and work for your living. For I'll tell you this, you'll only live up to the standard of the work you put into it. That's probably shocked you.

I'll repeat it in case you think I made a slip. You say, that's contrary to all I get taught. Well, somebody's not teaching you right.

You will have eternal life as a gift, but you will only have it in increasing measure as you work, not just as you believe. Go out there, and when you work, you'll discover all kinds of things. I remember when we moved out of London into the country when I was a boy.

I'm getting wound up. I shall have to stop normally. You pull my shirt tails.

I can remember when we moved out there, we saw these fields of waving corn. We always went at harvest time, real harvest time. You could have some real great times in the harvest field.

Not seeing an old stinking machine going around doing all this and that and the other. And you used to go out there and stack up the sheaves. I'm a country boy as well as a London boy.

It's very funny, isn't it? And it used to be wonderful. But you know, when we went out to gather the sheaves, do you know, we found dimmers in the sheaves. Did you know that? Well, they were called rabbits.

Yeah, yeah. As you worked, you fed. It's a law of nature.

You can laugh if you like. And I know it has a funny element, but it's true. You found rabbits.

You found all kinds of things that were there and they were yours. You didn't have to poach for them. Not that I've ever poached.

Do you see what I'm talking about? That's right. We will sing our hymn below it and spend a time again in worship with our own hearts open wide and making your contribution and Norman will be speaking to you. Thank you, number 61.

My God, what a comforting sight, what a blessing to know that my Jesus is mine. In the heavenly arms, my saviour I am, my heart is broken, but the sound of my name. True pleasure's abound in the rapturous sound, and whoever hath found it hath paradise found.

My Jesus, to know and feel his love's love is like heaven up in heaven below. My God, it runs low, my comfort and power, my heart is like heaven up in heaven below. Many years ago I remember I'd been to a meeting where a certain gentleman had been preaching one of those remarkable sermons that left you

afterwards totally devastated, not knowing whether you were coming or going.

Having gone to the meeting, thought that you've got it all sorted out and by the end of the meeting you didn't know whether you had or whether you hadn't. And I remember arriving outside of our house in Queen's Road in those days, I had a little green mini-traveller and I got out that night and I banged my hand on the top of there and I said, I hadn't a clue where I am. I don't know whether I am or whether I'm not.

But one thing I know, he has begun a good work in me. And what he has begun I am utterly convinced he will perform and perfect even under the day of Jesus Christ. God does not take us up for lovers to drop us.

God does not take us up and abandon us halfway through. What he begins, he sees through to the end because he is utterly faithful, gloriously consistent, wonderfully thorough, intolerant of sin. He will keep working at you and me until he has brought us right through and in.

Glory to his name. Hallelujah. Now I want to talk to you this morning about the truth of new birth.

I hope that I shall get through. Hallelujah. I want to look at the truth of new birth under the heading of three different questions.

First of all, why do I need to be born again? Secondly, how can I be born again? And thirdly, how can I be sure that I am born again? Three very simple questions. I'm going to look at three different passages of scripture and seek, discover God's answer. Now to begin with I want to read the very familiar passage in John chapter 3. 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 said unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a 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 the kingdom of God. That which is born of 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, thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel? And knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness.

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. It wasn't under condemnation, beloved, and don't allow the devil to take the word of God and use it unto that end to bring you into condemnation.

It wasn't unto condemnation, but it was unto salvation that Jesus came and spoke and ministered unto you and me. Glory to his name. Now there are three lovely statements that I want to point out to you quite simply by way of introduction.

In verse 3 it says, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Verse 5, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Verse 7, You must be born again.

That is the great categorical statement of Jesus. Not an invitation at the end of an evangelistic rally or meeting. Not an invitation to respond to him, but a clear, positive declaration that there is no alternative way into the kingdom of God except by new birth.

He said there is no other way. Hallelujah. That simplifies it all.

No alternatives. Lots of people say there are many ways to God, many ways to heaven. That's a lie, beloved.

Amen. You must be born again. And that's why it's so vital that you and I understand what God means when he makes that statement.

And that's why I want us to look at these three simple questions. Why do I need to be born again? How can I be born again? And how can I be sure that I am born again? Now obviously we can only look at the very surface of this subject. It's one of those things that should preoccupy you and hold your concentration, beloved, for a long, long time.

I would like you first of all then to turn into the Ephesian epistle and in chapter 2. This will serve my purpose this morning. It's one of many passages of scripture to which one could turn to find similar evidence. It's consistent with the whole revelation of scripture.

No one passage, beloved, contradicts another. First of all in verse 1 it says, And you who were dead in trespasses and sins. Then in verse 5, Even when you were dead in sins.

There's the first reason why you and I need to be born again. God's word says that natural man, because of sin, is dead. Now read the same truth, beloved, in the third chapter of the Colossian epistle.

You are dead. Dead because of sin. That was the sentence of God upon sin from the beginning.

We read in the scripture, He that sinneth will die. Of course that was the counsel that God had given to Adam, the head of the whole human race. He said, if you sin, you will die.

Said it in a slightly different way. He said, if you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will die. There were two significant trees in the garden of Eden.

One was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The other one was the tree of life. The invitation of God to man in the beginning was that he could eat of every tree of the garden with the exception of one.

That was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Every other tree, and of course included in the every other tree, beloved, was the tree of life. Now that was the original invitation of God to man, to partake of the tree of life and live forever.

In other words, to partake of divine nature, for that's what that tree represented. And that would have brought men and women into eternal life. That was what Adam forfeited.

The other tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and God said to Adam, if you eat of that tree, you will die. The devil said, you won't. Try it and see.

You will become as God. Try it. And man capitulated, beloved, to the temptation of the wicked one.

First Eve, and then Adam. Eve was deceived, Adam sinned, disobeyed God, ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and imbibed the nature of sin, imbibed the old man over against the great invitation, beloved, to partake of the new man. And so was he dwelt with the principle of sin and death.

And from that moment on, beloved, as far as God was concerned, man was dead. Not physically dead, but spiritually dead, separated, alienated, cut off from God, divorced from the very source of life. And that is the state of every single man and woman born into the world.

That is the state and condition that we inherit as a result of first birth. We are born into that state. It's called original sin.

Many of you have heard me say before, if you have any argument with the doctrine of original sin, all that you have to do is get married and have some children. And then you will stop arguing about the theory and face the dreadful reality, morning, noon, and night. Now lots of people can't stomach, beloved, the doctrine of original sin.

They have to make some alternative explanation as to how it got in. But I want to tell you, beloved, that God's Word says it came in at birth. It's an inherited state and condition.

And as a result, beloved, the whole human race outside of God's provision in Jesus Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. Jesus said, you have no life in you. We like to think that we're alive, but we're dead.

There's the first simple explanation. Go again into Ephesians chapter 2, verse 2. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation, that is our citizenship, our lifestyle, our pattern of living in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Here's the second explanation, beloved.

The human nature outside of Jesus Christ, the prince of the power of the air, works in the children of disobedience. When Adam partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he didn't just imbibe the principle of sin, beloved, he imbibed the nature of Satan. The prince of the power of the air works in the children of disobedience.

You see, some people talk about being void inside, empty. That's utterly inconsistent, beloved, with the revelation of the scripture, and it's also inconsistent, beloved, with scientific understanding. You can't live in void.

You and I were created, beloved, to be inhabited by a spirit. God's intention was that your life and my life should be the temple of God. We should be inhabited by the spirit of God, that we should have the nature of Jesus on the inside of us.

The terrible alternative to that, beloved, is the prince of the power of the air. It's one of those more gracious names associated with the enemy of man's soul, Satan, the devil. The prince of the power of the air works in the children of disobedience.

Now that's what will explain, beloved, your behavior and mine. Sins are the manifestation and outworking, beloved, of that principle or law working on the inside of you, making you do the things that you don't want to do, and preventing you from doing the things that you long to do. That was the great complaint, or great cry, of the Apostle Paul at the end of Romans chapter 7. He said, the good things that I want to do, I don't do, and the things that I hate myself for doing, I keep on doing them.

Who can help me? Of course, the glorious answer, beloved, was thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. And that is the experience of every man and every woman.

We try to improve ourselves. We try to do better. We turn over a new leaf.

We make promises. We make resolutions. We resolve this.

We resolve that. We try to control our nature. We try to improve our behavior.

There are all sorts of things which are introduced, beloved, to help us. Education is one. The amazing thing, beloved, is that education, generally speaking, is working in the opposite direction to what God is.

Education is trying to make people something, someone. Whereas God is working, beloved, to bring us to a place where we will acknowledge and confess that we are nothing, that we are dead in trespasses and sins, that in us there is no good thing. Apart from a principle that's working in the opposite direction.

The prince of the power of the air works in the children of disobedience. That's the explanation to everything that you read on your newspaper. Since we last met here a year ago, beloved, the world has been immersed in a war which could have led to the third great world war.

Read the front page of any newspaper, beloved. It's a devastating, it's the most depressing thing. There's only one thing more depressing than reading the front page of the newspaper and that's to become preoccupied with yourself.

That's why many people, beloved, live in the doldrums all the time. Inward looking. Constantly inspecting.

I often say they're like the fellow who plants the seed in the garden, won't leave it alone, keeps digging up, see how it's getting on. Don't wonder it never grows. Hallelujah.

That's why you have to come to a place, beloved, where you trust God and believe God to do what He has promised to do in your life. But that He has to bring us to a place where we're prepared to acknowledge, beloved, the prince of the power of the air works in the children of disobedience. And not just in the live of some people, beloved, it says amongst whom we all had our manner of life in time past.

Not all of us. Not some. It's always much more difficult, beloved, to convince respectable, educated, refined people of this truth.

A man came to me the other day when I made reference to this. I was down in Terracina in Italy. He was one of the workers there.

They'd just begotten themselves a lovely baby. There he was lying in the cradle. And when he heard me say this he was horrified at the thought, beloved, that the prince of the power of the air was operative even in his baby.

You know, sometimes we look into our baby's cots. Oh, they're so lovely, aren't they? Especially when they're asleep and their little shoes are under the bed. It all looks so beautiful.

Angelic. Praise God, I've still got the first pair of shoes that my eldest son wore. I don't know if he knows that I've got them, but I have.

They're beautiful. Very well worn. He was the fellow, beloved, who I talked to you about the other day, who walked.

Praise God. But you haven't begot angels, beloved. And it won't be very long before you discover that you haven't got angels.

I've always talked about the terrible twos and something, the horrific threes. And I don't know what the fours are. Well, it's when they get into their teenager.

And forgive me, you teenagers, if you're here this morning. Most of them are in the other tent. You do know that there are over 700 young people here, beloved, under the age of 20, don't you? 46% of this conference is below the age of 18.

Glory be to God. I tell you, that thrills my heart. Bless the Lord.

God's moving, God's working. And it's wonderful, beloved, to think that young people can be in a context where they're told the truth from the beginning instead of having to go on, like many of us did for years and years and years, muddling around, groveling, struggling, striving, not understanding why. Why things were working in us in the way that they did.

All the terrible inward contradictions of stresses and strains. No explanation. No one to tell us.

No one to point us away. If only someone had come and told me, beloved, in my teenage, that the prince of the power of the air was working me, that would have explained a lot of things. I wouldn't have come to the brink, beloved, of absolute destruction, breakdown, suicide.

The only reason why I studied psychology for four years, beloved, was trying to find out what was wrong with me, only to be told that I was incurable. And that's why most people study psychology. Amen.

It didn't bring any answer. It didn't bring any remedy. It brought a measure of alleviation.

It made life a little more bearable where I had some degree of explanation. And I'm not saying, beloved, that man and woman isn't a psychological creature, but there is a disposition, an area in his life which is much deeper than his soul. It's called his spirit.

And it's into that place that the spirit, the prince of the power of the air, beloved, has come as a trespasser, an invader, and he's working. Amen. He's not lying down, beloved.

He's not just sitting around. He's working. Of course, one of the things that he works at, beloved, is keeping you respectable, religious, pious.

Making sure that you toe the line without giving him the impression that anything's wrong. He doesn't like you to make a mess of it. It exposes him.

Amen. That's why I was so respectable for so long, beloved, and so religious, to the point, beloved, of getting my collar around the wrong way round. Hallelujah.

Some people used to say it was a slipped halo. Glory be to God. The prince of the power of the air works in the children of disobedience, and that's why there's such a tremendous emphasis, beloved, in the New Testament on deliverance.

Did you know that you need to be delivered? That you constantly need to be delivered? The word delivered, beloved, is the same word as saved in the New Testament. It's the same word as healed. Praise God.

You thought that the only person who needed deliverance, beloved, was the person who'd gone over the top, beloved, and was wild and crazy, heading towards the lunatic asylum. Amen. Every single human being born into the world, beloved, needs deliverance.

Jesus came to set the captives free, to set at liberty them that are bruised. Glory to his name. So that we could identify ourselves, beloved, with the latest statement of the Apostle Paul, for when he said, God works in me, both the will and the do of his good pleasure.

Amen. The will of God, beloved, is the great antithesis to the will of sin, and the activity of Satan in your life. You and I need to be born again, because we're dead in trespasses and sins, and have no life in us.

Apart from the life of the trespasser, beloved, the prince of the power of the air, who's working in the children of disobedience, taking advantage of every area of your life, of course, expressing and emphasising himself in this one and that one in a multiplicity of ways. Hallelujah. Again, beloved, there in verse 3, among whom we also had our manner of life in time past, fulfilling the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Now, we don't hear much about the wrath of God, and we don't like talking about the wrath of God. But God is a God of wrath, beloved. There were days when men like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, beloved, preached on the wrath of God, and people felt that they were being dangled over hell itself.

God is a God of wrath, beloved, and the only alternative to heaven is hell. You see, lots of people don't believe that either. The only alternative to heaven, beloved, is hell.

God is a God of wrath, and God has levelled his wrath against sin, because God hates sin. The wages of sin is death. God has declared his judgment on sin.

Now, the wonderful thing, beloved, is that when you compare the quotation that Jesus takes up in Luke chapter 4, at the introduction of his ministry, from Isaiah chapter 61, that Jesus omits a significant statement. In Isaiah chapter 1, it speaks about the day of wrath. When Jesus quoted that, scripture, beloved, he omitted it.

Not because he didn't believe that his father was a father of wrath, as well as a father of love, but because he was going to bear God's wrath in himself. Amen. He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we

might be made the righteousness of God in him.

It's the great doctrine, beloved, of substitution. Jesus coming and taking your place and my place, embracing all our sin. He was made sin for us.

It was a deliberate, willful act on his part. He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Beloved, Calvary was the great demonstration, not only of God's love, beloved, but of God's wrath upon sin.

For it was God, beloved, who crucified Jesus. It was in the great preordinations of God. It wasn't an afterthought in God's economy, beloved.

It was a part of the great plan of salvation that had been settled in heaven before sin ever came into the realm of human experience. Blessed be his name. God crucified Jesus.

And if you don't believe that, beloved, then you attribute the salvation and all that flows from Calvary to someone less than God. Of course, the devil was involved in it. Pilate was involved in it.

Caiaphas was involved in it. The Jews were involved in it. You were involved in it.

I was involved in it. But in the final analysis, beloved, the cross, where God meted out his wrath upon his son Jesus, was God's remedy, was God's solution, was God's provision for man's salvation. And anyone who responds to and receives that glorious provision, beloved, is delivered from the wrath to come.

But until, beloved, we are the children of wrath. That's what my Bible says very clearly. And we're by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

That's why I need to be born again, beloved. If I don't want to suffer the wrath of God and the terrible judgment of God upon sin, which is death and eternal separation from him, the destiny of which, beloved, will land me in hell. God's only alternative to heaven.

Then I need to be born again and emancipated and set free from the tragedy and terrible legacy of sin and the activity of the old man, in order that I might become a child of God. A fourth reason. Go further down in the chapter.

Verse 12. At that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ you who were sometime afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Listen to it. Without Christ. Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

Strangers to the covenants of promise. With no hope. Without God in the world.

What a picture of desolation. And that statement, beloved, without God, is the only place in the New Testament where the word atheist appears. Without God literally means atheist.

God has no place for the agnostic. That's the fence sitter, the person who likes to sit on the fence and have a free opinion about things, either or. There's no place in scripture for that at all, beloved.

God is a God of either or. Either you're in or you're out. Essentially.

Fundamentally. Without Christ. Aliens.

Strangers. No hope. Atheist.

Without God in the world. What a picture. People wonder, beloved, that as we look upon the lives of men and women we see them as being hopeless, aimless, lives meaningless.

And those, beloved, who've been in positions where they've been able to exploit all the alternatives and look for answers in other directions. Those who've had the greatest opportunity to do that, beloved, are the people who come to the point of greatest distress. That's why in the highest income brackets of men and women, beloved, you have the greatest suicide rate in the world.

And why in societies, beloved, where everything materially would seem to be wonderful, human relationships, particularly in the areas of marriage, beloved, are just cascading into chaos and confusion. Hopeless. Empty.

Barren. Lonely. One of the greatest curses of the human race at this time, beloved, is the dreadful feeling of loneliness.

Isolation. Separation. You can be in the midst of a vast company of people and know, beloved, that you're all alone.

Without God in the world. Now, on this earth, beloved, it's virtually impossible to realise what that means in its ultimate sense. Because you and I are surrounded by everything that is expressive of God and his love.

The whole creation, beloved, is an expression of it. Not that God lives in creation, but creation is an expression. That's why Paul takes up the great theme of creation in the early chapters of the Roman Epistle.

And he said, if we pay attention to the fact that God is responsible for all that, well, then he will lead it on. And if we don't, beloved, we are without excuse. Heaven above is brighter blue.

Earth around is sweeter green. Something lives in every hue. Christless eyes have never seen.

Birds with gladder songs will flow. Flowers with deeper beauty shine. Since I know, as now I know, I am his and he is mine.

Now, many people, beloved, don't see this. They don't realise it. They recognise it.

But it's all there. He causes the sun to shine on the righteous and on the unrighteous. He causes it to rain on the just and the unjust.

The air, beloved, is free, polluted though it is by man's iniquity. We don't know the extremities, beloved, of separation and isolation and loneliness. In their ultimate sense, that's what hell will be like.

It's the absolute. That's another tragedy, beloved, of our modern society. People are not prepared for absolutes.

That's why everyone is aiming towards anarchy. Everything has become variable. God speaks in the terms of absolute, lest it be his name.

So there we have, beloved, four very simple reasons, apart from that which we saw in John's Gospel, chapter 3. If you're not born again, you can't see the kingdom of God. If you're not born of water and the Spirit, you can't enter the kingdom of God. You must be born again.

Why? Because you're dead. Why? Because the prince of the power of the air is working in the children of this disobedience. Why, beloved? Because without Christ, we are the children of wrath.

Why? Because we're without God, we're without Christ. We're strangers, we're alone, we're alien. For all that is of God, it's a picture of utter dereliction.

And hopelessness and despair. And of course it's that which drives many human beings, beloved, to absolute despair. And that's the whole picture, beloved, that you will read in the Scripture from the Genesis right through to the Revelation.

It's a gloomy picture. And if God hadn't provided a way out, a way of escape in Christ, we would be utterly without hope. Now, let's move on quickly, beloved, to our second question.

How? Now this is the question that Nicodemus asked. It was the natural, logical question. Go back into John chapter 3, you'll find it in verse 9. Let's read verse 8. The wind bloweth where it listeth, thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth.

So is every one that is born of the Spirit. It has nothing to do with man, beloved. It's the sovereign, merciful, gracious intervention of God.

The initiative with Him, the work is with Him, and the conclusion of it all lies in Him. Amen. He's the one who begins it, beloved, and He's the one who promises to complete it.

That's why He's called the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. It's all in Christ. That's why we saw yesterday morning, beloved, that we are complete in Him.

You can't add anything to Him. You dare not take anything away from Him. There is a sufficiency.

Glory to His name. It's all of God. Nicodemus, verse 9, answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? You let your mind run back, beloved, through the early years of the life of Jesus, right back to the moment of His nativity.

You will recall that another person asked exactly the same question. You'll find it in Luke chapter 1. It was Mary, who had just been addressed by the angel Gabriel, who was representing God unto her at that time, telling her what He desired of her. She was to be the vehicle whereby the Christ, God's great eternal remedy, the Messiah, was going to be born into the world.

She was virgin. She was but a girl. She wasn't married.

Hallelujah. And God came to her and spoke to her. Again and again, beloved, He takes up the most insignificant of people and outworks His great purposes and plans through their lives.

Read the Old Testament and see how many characters of insignificance, according to man's estimation, didn't qualify for the very people upon whom God set His heart. That was true of David. He wasn't even in line for consideration, totally overlooked.

He was out there looking after the sheep. When Samuel came in search, amen, he was nowhere to be found. And it was only after all the others had been interviewed and looked upon and God had declared His displeasure, amen, that they suddenly remembered that there was this lad out there looking after the sheep and he was the man.

You've got the character of Gideon. He's another one. He says he was the least of all his father's house, and yet he became the great savior of Israel, one of the judges.

Glory be to God. God often takes up those who are insignificant for Him, and that should give you great hope. Bless the Lord, especially when we're looking at a subject like this.

I love that passage. It comes at the end of 1 Corinthians chapter 1, where He says He takes those which are not to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. Bless God.

That should give you hope, beloved. You can't be less than not. Amen.

That's where God begins, beloved. And that's why He has to face up with all the truth that we've just seen in chapter 2 of the Ephesian epistle. Because if we will agree with that and acknowledge that, we will come to a place where we recognize that we don't qualify.

There's nothing in us, beloved, that merits God's goodness. And that's why if you go on reading in that lovely chapter, you come to the same. For by grace, as you say, through faith, and that not of yourself, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Of course, most people stop there, but you mustn't in the light of what we've already heard this morning. For you are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that you should walk in, preordained for, planned by God. Amen.

God has to bring us to a place, beloved, where we're prepared to acknowledge that we disqualify totally because of our inherited state and condition. We're nothing. We're nobody.

Amen. And then God comes to us. Now, when God spoke to Mary, beloved, by the angel and told her that she was to be the vehicle whereby the saviour of the world was to come into being, this is what she said, How shall this be? Seeing that I know not a man.

Almost identical statement. How can this thing be? How shall this be? Amen. It had impossibility written all over it, and so is your life and my life.

Wesley wrote, didn't he? He said, The most impossible thing of all is that sin should cease in you and me. Praise God. Impossibility written over it all.

But you'll read in verse 37 of the first chapter of Luke's gospel, For with God nothing shall be impossible. The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. No word of God is devoid of power.

That's what that verse means. Because behind everything that God says, beloved, is God's power to perform it, to do it. Hallelujah.

And that's why it's so vital that you and I both here agree with and adhere to the word of the Lord. Then the power of God is released, beloved, unto us to bring it into our experience. And it will deliver us out of everything that we know that we are because of first birth.

And introduce us into the great realm of new birth. Now we have two records in the scripture of the birth of Jesus. One's here in Luke chapter 1 and the other one is in Matthew chapter 1. And they're not there just there, beloved, to tell us the historical record of the birth of Jesus.

They're not there just to fulfill the necessity of a Christmas sermon. They're there, beloved, because they're relevant to your salvation and mine. In fact, the record of the birth of Jesus is the great divine blueprint for every new birth.

Amen. The explanation to the natural birth of Jesus is the definition and explanation, beloved, to every true spiritual birth. He was the firstborn.

Amen. And God doesn't just want one son. Read both in the Roman epistle and the Hebrew epistle.

He's going to bring many sons unto glory. It's a wonderful thing, beloved, to recognize that Jesus is God. And if you don't recognize that, then you divest the gospel, beloved, of all its authority.

If Jesus wasn't God, then God in Christ has no remedy for sin. Of course, we must acknowledge him as Lord. We must confess him as Savior.

Amen. But he's our brother. If you like, you're identical twin.

That's why in the scripture we read that we're to be like Jesus. And you can't be like Jesus. We can sing that lovely song, another chorus of aspiration, O to be like thee, O to be like thee.

And I know what we've sung. I've sung it many times, beloved. But as I said last night, it's got to get beyond aspiration.

Not just gazing at him, beloved, and longing and wanting. So often when I hear people pray, beloved, and this is not criticism, but so often when I hear people pray, people say, I want to praise you. I want to love you.

I want to do this. I want to do that. I believe that's why our brother made a correction last night and said, stop wanting, brother.

Do it. Amen. It's amazing how we gather verbal junk, isn't it? We do it unconsciously.

You soon recognize, beloved, where people belong to, what group they move in, because of the terminology that they use. We pick it up. Amen.

As I say, there are two records of the birth of Jesus. Now, for my purpose this morning, I'm going to take the Matthew one, although I will jump into Luke again a bit later on. We could take either, beloved.

Now, in the 18th verse of Matthew chapter 1, by the way, the chapter begins with this, the book of the generation of Jesus Christ. Of course, you've all read a little book written entitled The Generation of Jesus Christ, or you're supposed to have read it. I read it before it was in its present form.

When it was originally written, the author was out of the country and I was asked to do the proofreading. I read it and I said, if you publish it in its present form, no one would have a clue what he's on about, except those of us who know him very closely. So they refrained from publishing it in his absence.

And when he came home, I told him what I'd told them. He said, oh, give it back to me. He said, I'll rewrite it, and he rewrote it.

And then he gave it back to the printer and he said, it's still me, but it's now mincemeat. Amen. Hallelujah.

The generation of Jesus Christ, over against the generations of all those who preceded him. That's the significance of that statement. And then you had to read down through this first chapter of Matthew's gospel.

It's the generation singular. Who shall declare his generation? The only people who do that, the limit of the people, who are born again of the spirit of God and who have come of the generation of Jesus. I was talking in the Longcroft just one week ago on Sunday morning, picked up a quotation out of the book of Nehemiah, where it talks about the genealogy.

And they were assessing, beloved, the people. You know how Nehemiah came and restored Jerusalem. Ezra had come and supervised the restoration of the temple.

And then they were sorting out the people who belonged and the people who didn't belong. And there was one group of people, beloved, who were involved in the priesthood. And remember what you heard about the priesthood last night, whose names were not in the genealogy.

And they were excluded. And I had written in the top of my Bible a long time ago, one of the explanations to many of the problems that exist in the church of Jesus Christ today are the failure of men and women to recognize the genealogy of Jesus. If you don't belong to the genealogy of Jesus, then you're not of His generation.

And if you're not of His generation, beloved, it's because you haven't been born again. That doesn't mean to say that you can't be. It doesn't mean to say that God has an intention and plans for you.

It doesn't mean to say that He hasn't set His love upon you and initiated a work by way of prevenient grace with the intention of bringing you right in and right through. But it's vital, beloved, that we become a member of the generation, of the genealogy. He said you must be born again.

I didn't write the New Testament, beloved, and Jesus didn't write it and speak it under condemnation. Glory! It's the only hope that men and women have, beloved, in the light of the devastating picture that is painted for us again and again in the pages of Scripture that tells us our state and conditions outside of Jesus Christ were without hope, were without God in the world. If God hadn't made provision in Jesus, beloved, whereby we could be introduced into that great family of God, where would we be? Many of us are here in this tent, beloved, because we revel in the fact that there came a day when God by His Spirit spoke into the depths of our heart and accomplished a work, a miracle of grace that delivered us from all that we were naturally born and made us new creations in Christ.

Oh, I tell you, beloved, when that happened, I thought I'd gone to heaven for three months. I didn't know where I was. Now, my problem was that I had thought that I'd been born again a long time before.

I think I said to you the other day, someone suggested I wasn't, and I nearly punched them on the nose for their suggestion. That was the proof I wasn't. Amen.

But when God came and spoke to me, beloved, and dealt with me, I knew I was. It didn't happen in a religious meeting. I was in a business meeting, sitting on a cushion in the middle of a particular room that I could take you to, the very spot.

I used to mock people, beloved, who would talk of the day and the moment and the time, let alone the place. But I could take you to the very place, beloved, where I was sitting when God spoke into the depth of my being and delivered me and set me free. I left that room, beloved, in the third heaven.

And I didn't come down for a long time. I don't think I've ever come down. Amen.

Wonderful. I didn't understand it all then, beloved. I couldn't have explained it to you in the way that I'm talking about this morning.

I wouldn't have known all the scriptures, texts. I don't know how you feel, beloved, when you hear someone who's been in the way much longer than you have unfolding the scripture. I don't know how you felt last night.

It makes you feel a dreadful ignorance, beloved. And if the devil had his way, you'd end up all depressed and think, well, I haven't even begun. I'll have to go home and start reading my Bible to try and find out about it.

Where does he learn it all from? Amen. You ever feel like that? Sure you do. You go away at the end of conference, resolving that you really get the grips and read the Bible and come all clued up the next year.

But you come the next year, beloved, and then you hear another one of these fantastic sermons and you think, oh, I haven't made much progress. Oh, hallelujah. Amen.

So vital, beloved, that you and I understand what is and believe God to bring us into the great genealogy of Jesus. Now in verse 18 it says, Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. It's a very simple statement, isn't it? The birth of Jesus Christ was like this.

This is how it happened. This is the explanation. This is how it all came into being.

The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. Then you have to study the verses that follow. I want to draw out, beloved, five simple truths.

As I say, time will only enable me to introduce them to you. You must go home and meditate upon them. The psalmist constantly exhorts us to meditate upon God's Word until it gets out of the book, beloved, inscribed upon the fleshy tables of our heart and becomes the very substance and fabric of our being to be worked out in our daily living.

Glory to his name. Here's the first thing that I want us to see. It's in verse 22.

Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet. Amen. Jesus, beloved, was the fulfillment of God's Word.

That's one of the lovely things about Matthew's Gospel Bible, one of the reasons for which it was written, addressed particularly to people, beloved, who were familiar with Old Testament scriptures. You'll keep reading in Matthew's Gospel, the scripture says, the prophet says, as it is written. And you will find, beloved, that Jesus' life was the fulfillment of the Word of God that had been spoken down through the

generations, beginning right back there in the book of Genesis where it talks about the seed of a woman bruising the serpent's head.

There's the first great messianic promise, beloved, declaring right hard on the heels of sin and Satan, beloved, that God was going to bring a moment in time when He would send the Saviour into the world. He had to wait generation upon generation upon generation, beloved. His patience, His long suffering is baffling to the natural mind.

But there it is. The seed of a woman will bruise the serpent's head. That's why Jesus was crucified, beloved, on a hill called Golgotha.

The place of the skull, even the typology, the picture language of Bible, beloved, is accurate. Very accurate. God does not use illustrations loosely.

That's why the great illustration of birth, beloved, is such a magnificent one. And remember, Paul said first that which is natural and then that which is spiritual. And once God opens your eyes and causes you to see, beloved, you will see spiritual truth in every natural thing.

Everything will become like an open book to you, beloved. It will become a Bible. It will minister to you.

It will teach you. Amen. Under the inspiration of God's Spirit, Jesus' life, beloved, and birth was the fulfillment of the Word of God.

God spoke it into being. That's why John opens his gospel as he does. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the life of men, and so on and so on.

Hallelujah. He was the Word of God, beloved, incarnate. He was the Word of God personified.

He was the Word of God in flesh and blood. He was the Word of God fulfilled. And that's how you get born again.

God speaks you into being by His life-giving Word addressed to the depth of your heart. Amen. And enabling you to respond to what He says in fact.

Can you remember that Word that brought you out of death into life? Hmm. One of the first sermons I ever heard Mr. North preach, if that's what one calls them. Amen.

Let's never forget the original Word that God spoke to you. That brought you out of death into life. The Word that God spoke to me was this, Norman, for God's sake, stop trying and let me live.

Amen. You won't find that in the Bible. You'll find a parallel to it.

But even a text out of the Bible, beloved, couldn't have come more powerfully to my heart. And couldn't accomplish more than it did. Amen.

It delivered me. Saved me. Glory to His name.

Everything that God has ever done, beloved, He has done by speaking it into being. That's why it behoves you and I to hear. He that hath ears, to hear.

Let him hear. So often, beloved, God speaks and it goes in one ear and out of the other. And that's why the devil, beloved, delights to keep men and women in ignorance.

That's why Paul keeps saying, I would not have you ignorant. I would not have you ignorant. I would not have you ignorant.

We're told that the time of man's ignorance, God winked at, beloved, but God doesn't intend you and I to remain in ignorance. That's why God comes and He speaks to us. And that's why we must expose ourselves to the Word of God, beloved.

If we want God to fulfill His Word in us and outwork it through us, we must hear. Remember there used to be a young lady came to our meetings and she would go to the meeting, beloved, and God would speak so relevantly and so powerfully and so wonderfully to her condition, beloved, it was almost unbelievable that something didn't happen. We talked to her afterwards and we say, didn't you hear? And she says, what? I hadn't heard at all, beloved.

I tell you, lots of people go to meetings and they're deaf. The devil's deafened them. My wife got very concerned about her and suggested that we should fast and pray.

I said to my wife, did God tell you to fast and pray? She said, yes. I said, well, go and do it then. Amen.

Being the sort of wife she is, she did exactly what she was told and she went and did it. Next meeting that that young woman went to, beloved, David Wetherly preached. He preached on that magnificent passage in Luke's Gospel about Zacchaeus.

For the first time ever, that young woman heard the Word of God loud and clear. Amen. And not only did she hear it loud and clear, beloved, she responded to what she heard right down to the last detail of the things which God spoke to her.

And I've still got the little blue piece of paper with lines on with the accounts of one of the things that God told her to get sorted out. Amen. There wasn't anything muddled, beloved.

There wasn't anything airy-fairy. It became very real, very practical. God spoke and she heard.

Amen. And, of course, you had to go on hearing. And hearing, beloved, whatsoever he said unto you, do it.

That was the first explanation. Here's the second one, verse 23. This is the prophetic word.

Behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son. Amen. A virgin.

You'll read about it, beloved, in the prophecy of Isaiah. A virgin. Some people say, well, that's a young maiden.

Well, she was a virgin. The great doctrine of the virgin birth. Of course, most denominations, beloved, are disregarding that precious truth and saying it is totally irrelevant to the gospel.

Well, I want to tell you, beloved, that if Jesus was not born out of virginity, then he was contaminated, as every other human being was and is, by sin and, therefore, becomes no remedy for man's salvation. Belief in the virgin birth, beloved, is essential to salvation. That's how important it is.

And that will be an indication, beloved, as to how far modern Christendom has slipped away from the truth. That can play fast and loose with the word of God. Pick and choose and think that they can find a remedy better than the one that God has provided.

Jesus was born out of virginity. Amen. Let me turn into the Corinthian epistle, the second one, chapter 11, where Paul's talking and he's only giving expression, beloved, to all that was in the heart of God concerning you and me.

Would to God you could bear with me a little in my folly, and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. For I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ.

Amen. Beloved, in order that you and I might be born again, praise God, the analogies interrelate. God has to restore us, beloved, to a state of virginity.

Well, you say, that counts me out. That is one of the qualifying factors that's going to bring about my new birth. If I've got to come out of virginity, then I'm out.

Now, he's not talking purely or simply about sexuality. It includes that. But the scripture universally says that all of us have played the harlot.

You read, say, the prophecy of Hosea. Wonderful book, where God identifies himself, the prophet, beloved, who was going through an agony with an adulterous wife. Read the second chapter in particular, where God really bears his heart, beloved, and expresses all that is within him.

Amen. Where he talks about betrothing himself unto them. All about virginity.

All of us, beloved, without exception, have played the harlot. We've given ourselves, in spirit, we have been married to other things, to other beings, to other persons, other than him. We're adulteresses.

We're adulterers. And even in the realm of sexuality, beloved, taking into account the exposition of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, you don't have to actually go through the mechanical practice of fornicating, beloved, but Jesus said, if you look on a woman to lust after her, you've already committed adultery in your heart. And the reason for which Jesus came, beloved, and shed his blood, was to wash us and cleanse us and reinstate us back into that condition and position of virginity.

It links with what Mr. North was talking about last night, as the great labor, beloved, of regeneration, that precedes everything else, the provision that there is in the cleansing element that God has provided in Jesus. When his side was pierced and they gushed out both blood and water, sufficient and adequate, beloved, to meet our every need and make us clean. Oh, glory to his name.

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And as though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Amen.

You're to be born out of virginity. Thirdly, here's a lovely truth. And they, it's in the same 23rd verse, Matthew chapter 1, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.

Beloved, he was born into a name. If you read this passage through, beloved, you'll find that he was given three names. Wonderful names.

Of course in the Old Testament he was given many other names, wasn't he? He was called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. But here, beloved, in this lovely chapter, he's given three very significant names and they're names all that relate to you and me. He's called Emmanuel, which is God with us.

It's a wonderful thing, beloved, to know that God's with us. He's with us. Do you believe that? Or do you just quote that text out of the Scripture where two or three are met together in his name? He's there.

Do you really believe that, beloved, that he's with us? That he's here in the midst of us, by his Spirit, he's pleased to make himself present. At the end of Matthew's Gospel he says, I will never leave you nor forsake you, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. The way the Gospel begins, beloved, the way the Gospel ends.

That great name, Emmanuel, God with us. Then he was called Saviour. That is Jesus, Saviour.

Verse 21, for he shall save his people from their sins. That's God for us. Amen.

Of course, most people think that God's against them. Read the Hebrew epistle, beloved, and you'll find that he's not against you, he's for you. He died for you.

He shed his blood for you. He appears in the presence of God for you. He's received the Holy Ghost for you.

He's done everything for you. He's for you. And then the third lovely name that he was given, beloved, there in this chapter is the name Christ.

Which is God in us. God with us. God for us.

And God in us. Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. The mystery of God untold to our hearts.

God in us. The hope of glory. His name, beloved, and all those names, and the appropriation of the truth that is linked with those names is relevant to your salvation and mine.

That's why he gives us this lovely new name. Writes his name upon us. Not just on our foreheads, beloved, but upon the flesh he tables our heart.

To bring us into the nature of the name. Names in Scripture, beloved, weren't just appendages to differentiate one person from another. Names were given because they had significance.

They described the character of the person. And virtually were prophetic concerning the outworking of the life through that person. That's why many people's names in the Scripture are changed.

Why Abraham became Abraham. Why Jacob became Israel. Why Simon became Peter.

Why Saul became Paul. They weren't just fancies. Hallelujah.

They were significant because they had relevance both to the nature, character, and the development of the behavior of the person who lived in that name. That's why many people say we should live up to our

name. Praise God.

He was given a name at his birth and so were you. Praise God and you were given a new name at your birth. That's why Paul could write, you receive me as an angel of God even as Christ Jesus.

That's why he could say Christ is my life. He received the name. Blessed be God.

He knew that God was with him. He knew that Jesus was for him. And he knew that Christ was in him.

And that's what happens when we're born again. The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. Verse 18.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise when his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph. Before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Verse 20.

While he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and dreamed, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Jesus was born of the Holy Ghost.

Wasn't born of Joseph. Wasn't in the deeper sense, beloved, born of Mary. He was born of the Holy Ghost.

And so is everyone that is born again. Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That's why the baptism of the Spirit, beloved, and the new birth are inseparable doctrinally in the Scripture.

Amen. You cannot divorce them. New birth, beloved, has no reality unless it is motivated and brought into being by the operation of the Spirit.

I often say it's like having a car without any petrol. You won't get anywhere. And it was on the day of Pentecost, beloved, that men and women were born again for the first time in all of history.

No one could be until the Spirit came. For the same Spirit that lived in Jesus, that brought Jesus into being as a man on the earth, beloved, is the same Spirit that comes to live in you and me. Hallelujah.

To bring us into the reality and experience of what new birth is all about. Many of us know the theory before we live in the reality. I'm so glad I didn't know anything about the baptism of the Spirit, beloved, until I'd been baptized in the Holy Ghost.

Three months elapsed before I even knew what had happened to me. Praise God. And, of course, originally I thought it was a second blessing because that was the context in which I was taught originally.

But then, beloved, as I read this Scripture again with open eyes, I saw that as a result of being baptized in the Holy Ghost, what had happened was that I had come alive in Christ. And for the first time in my experience was living in the reality of what the New Testament speaks of as new birth. Now, no one taught me that, beloved.

I found it. Or rather, the Spirit of God revealed that to my heart. The detail, beloved, and the Scripture related to it became increasingly wonderful to me.

Praise God. God has a tremendous ability, beloved, to upset our theological applicants. And in His faithfulness put us right where we're all wrong.

Glory to His name. One last truth, beloved. How Jesus was born.

Here it is in verse 24. Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him and took unto him his wife. And he knew her not until she had brought forth her firstborn son and called his name Jesus.

Amen. He did. And not only did he do, beloved, but also Mary did.

And that's why in Luke's Gospel, when she heard the word of the Lord, this is what she said, And in the fullness of time, beloved, there was a performance of those things which were spoken unto her by the Lord. You see, that's what gave her authority much later on in her life to say to other people, Why? Because she'd done it. She wasn't just uttering words, beloved.

She wasn't just speaking theories. She was expressing the reality that she had experienced in her own person as she had responded to the word of the Lord. Praise God.

Not according to my idea, not according to my preconceived thoughts, but according to thy word. That's why it's so vital, beloved, that you and I should understand what God says about great subjects like this. Now we've seen why we need to be born again.

We've seen how. And our time is gone. But I'm going to keep you a few more minutes and quote to you, beloved, scriptures that you can go and meditate upon that will prove to you that you are.

Amen? I think I said to you last night, a young man once listening to a conversation that I was having with another person came to me and said, if what you said to him is true, then I'm not born again. And I said, I told you that I said to him, go away and do a certain thing. The thing that I told him to do was go away and read the first epistle of John on his knees.

And he would discover without a shadow of doubt whether he was or whether he wasn't. Amen. I love the first epistle of John, beloved.

That's why that young man, that other young man, was exhorted to read it and read it and read it and read it and read it until it yielded up its truth. Many people write books, beloved, to try and explain away what it says rather than take it at its face value and believe God to make it a reality in their life. I don't want to argue with God.

I don't want God to alter or water down His truth to accommodate me in anything less than the very best that He's got for me. And what I desire for myself, beloved, I desire for every other man and woman. I want what God has in His heart for me and what He's provided for me in Jesus.

And that which in His faithfulness, beloved, He has inspired men to write in the book for me to read, not analyse, not argue about, not criticise, not to eliminate, beloved, but to read it, respond to it, obey it, believe it and trust Him, beloved, to work it. Amen. Now there are seven.

This is why I haven't got time in ten minutes, beloved. There are seven great fundamental evidences simply stated in the first epistle of John that will leave you without a shadow of doubt that you've been born again. You become a child of God.

Beginning as a baby, yes, to go on until maturity. There's a difference between spirituality and maturity. A baby, beloved, is a total human being.

And as it grows and develops, it will mature. When you and I are born again, we're born again and may bathe in Christ. You don't expect to obey, beloved, what you expect of a mature adult.

But as you go on and learn to live blamelessly, you will live in the hope and expectation, beloved, that God will fulfill His ultimate word and present you hopeless. In that great day, you'll stand before Him and see Him as He is and you'll discover that you're just like Him. He that has this hope in Him purifies Himself even as He is pure.

Amen. But it begins with birth. Let me read the seven scriptures to you.

I'm not going to do anything else. I'm not even going to comment. I may read other scriptures that just add to them, beloved, that will help you in your meditation.

Here's the first one, the end of 1 John, chapter 2, verse 28. Now, little children. I want you to notice, beloved, how often John says little children.

He addresses all the important fundamental things, but the little children, not the old men. Those old men, beloved, are so set in their ways and so convinced of their position that they're not prepared to listen or change their ways. So he starts with the little children.

That's why Jesus said you must become as a little child. You must be born. That's the only way you become a little child.

You're born. Praise God. And now, little children, abide in Him that when He shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

For you know that He is righteous. You know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him. Chapter 3, verse 7. Little children, let no man deceive you.

He that doeth righteousness is righteous even as He is righteous. Verse 10. In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil.

Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. Here's the first evidence that you're born again, beloved. The principle of righteousness is distilled in your heart and you do it.

Not just believing it, you do it. Praise God. Here's the second truth.

Chapter 3. This is the one most people argue about. Verse 9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God. Chapter 5, verse 18.

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not. I didn't write that. Now, the verse that will help you understand that, beloved, is verse 6 of the same chapter.

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Now, you must read that, beloved, with the backdrop of John chapter 15 where he talks about the vine and the branch and the abiding relationship and the secret, beloved, of victory, constantly and continually is abiding in him.

And the explanation to a vine, beloved, is the seed. And it's his seed. And if his seed is in you rather than the seed of sin, and remember that Galatians chapter 3, verse 16 says, and your seed is Christ.

If the seed Christ is in you and me, hallelujah, and we are abiding in the seed and in the life of that seed, in other words, in the vine, then we have the answer for victory over sin. Not a static state, beloved. It's a continuous, ongoing result of an intimate relationship that's brought into being by birth.

Don't argue about it, beloved. Believe God to accomplish it. And you'll discover that the habit of sin is broken and that you're alive in God.

You're a part of the great living vine of God. The habit of sin has ceased. Peter said, cease from sin.

Paul said, shall we continue in sin? God forbid. Sin is the exception to the norm, not the rule. Amen.

It doesn't say that you can't sin anymore, but you need not and you should not, because of the blood, because of the cross, and because of the Spirit. God's great threefold call. Believe it, beloved.

No confidence in yourself, but confidence in Him. Here's our third lovely truth, chapter 4, verse 7. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. Verse 17, herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world, not the next.

You will only be in the next world, beloved, what you are in this world. God's great salvation, beloved, is present, and will only have any significance future, if we believe that. Amen.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus said that's the fulfillment of the whole law, and Jesus was the fulfillment of the law for righteousness sake, and He said the law of God is also fulfilled in you. Amen.

Number 4, chapter 5, verse 1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Oh, we say, we believe that. So does the devil.

The devil believes, beloved, that Jesus was born in Nazareth, rather in Bethlehem, lived in Nazareth. In fact, he sought to exterminate Him from very word go, through the instrumentality of Herod. And that's why Jesus lived the earlier part of His life as a refugee down in Egypt.

Amen. There's no state and condition that men and women have experienced, beloved, that Jesus didn't go through. Bless God.

As far as man was concerned, beloved, Jesus was illegitimate. Lots of people think that's an awful curse. Well, Jesus bore the curse for you, blessed be His name.

But the devil knew that Jesus was born in Nazareth, that Jesus was the Christ. Turn back into chapter 4, beloved. A little help.

Here it is in verse 2. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. Now, the operative word, beloved, is the word confess.

The only thing that you and I can confess. In other words, the only thing that you and I believe is what we personally know and are. Go further down in chapter 4. You'll come to this lovely verse.

Verse 15. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. Now, that's what the Scripture means when it talks about believing, when it talks about confessing.

That Jesus Christ has been born of God. That is born in you, born in me. Hallelujah.

Number 5. Chapter 5, verse 4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Here's the proof that you're born again, beloved. You become an overcomer.

Not because you're stronger, better, or more able than anyone else. In fact, on the contrary. If you're trying to overcome in your own strength, you will be constantly faced up with your own failure.

That's why Paul testified to the fact, beloved, that his weakness was God's strength, or rather the occasion or the platform for the display of God's strength. God said, I am made perfect in your weakness. Go back again into chapter 4 where you have the explanation to this.

See, the Bible is a wonderful commentary on the Bible, if you learn how to read it. You have to let the Spirit of God take your eyes to and fro. I quite often read my Bible backwards.

Amen. I read the last verse and ask myself the question, well, how did he get there? And then retrace my steps and find how he arrived. Here it is, chapter 4, verse 4. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

Amen. Go back into John's gospel. Chapter 16 and verse 33.

These things have I spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer.

I have overcome the world. Amen. Beloved, when you and I are born again of the Spirit of God, the overcomer of the world comes to live on the inside of us.

The overcomer of the world, the victorious one, the triumphant one, the glorious one, he comes to live in us. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. Amen.

Now have you got that overcomer of the world living inside of you? Or have you just got his name written on your running shoes or on your sweatshirt? Nike. I often say to young people, you don't realize that you're running around with Jesus' name written on your shirt, do you? The word Nike, beloved, is a derivative of the Greek word Nikon, which is the word overcome here. Jesus was the overcomer of the world, the great Nikon.

Some people have Nikon cameras. Amen. Nike, triumphant one, victorious one.

It's not on your shoes that you need it, beloved. Although you do need to be shod with the glorious gospel, truth of the gospel. Not just on your shirt, but it's being written in your heart.

Hallelujah. To know that you've got the overcomer of the world, beloved, living in the inside of you. He's overcome the world.

So you'll never face anything or anyone, beloved, for which he hasn't made provision. If you've got the greater one living on the inside of you, you've got the guarantee of victory as you look to him and trust in him. Look at your circumstances, look at your conditions, listen to the lies of the devil.

Accommodate, beloved, the temptings and the allurings of Satan, beloved, you will fail. But if you look unto him, that lovely word in Hebrews chapter 12, look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cost, despising the shame, and is set down at the throne of the majesty of God on high. Glory to his name.

Is that who you've got on the inside of you? Amen. Has he been born in you, beloved, and therefore you know that you're born again of the Holy Ghost. Number six.

Chapter five, verse 18. There are two here, six and seven. In fact there are three, we've already touched upon one.

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not. We've looked at that one. He that is begotten of God, another way of saying being born of God, keepeth himself.

Amen. There's the proof that you're born again of God, beloved. You have the ability to keep yourself.

You just turn over in the book below to that little letter of Jude, and we tend to focus on the verse 24. Now unto him that is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless in the presence of his glory, with exceeding great joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. And we all say, Amen, wonderful, he's keeping us.

Jesus prayed the same thing. He said, Father, keep them from evil. Don't take them out of the world, but keep them.

Lots of us would wish, beloved, that we hadn't got to go away from the conference and live out there in the world next week with all the pressures and trials and tribulations and temptations. But that's where God has ordained that you should live, beloved. So don't run away.

Lots of people think the grass on the other side of the fence is greener. That's a lie. Have you seen that lovely poster which is the junction of four fields, there's a fence down to the middle of the poster, four lovely fields, and there's a cow in each field.

And each cow has got its head through the fence nibbling the grass in the other field. I want to tell you, beloved, that's an infamous lie of the devil. The grass is not greener on the other side of the fence.

And there is no better place for you than the place where God in his infinite wisdom has designed that you should be at this present moment in time. For that's where you discover the reality, beloved, and the outworking as to whether you are generally born again. Don't think, beloved, that our situation will be easier.

The places which you think are most easy, beloved, is the place where the devil works most subtly. Lots of people think it's all glamour to go on the mission field. It will be wonderful there.

You try. Amen. You think that you're surrounded by demons, beloved.

Go and live in a city like Kathmandu. Amen. Where they have a little temple about every two feet down the pavement.

Glory be to God. Now, if you go up into verse 21 of Jude, it says, keep yourselves in the love of God. Keep yourself.

He promises to keep you, but you're also to keep yourself. You see, when you are born again, beloved, you're not born into a situation where you're going to be dominated and manipulated and driven by the Spirit of God. God doesn't handle your life like that.

When you and I are born again, we are brought into a living relationship, a mutual relationship with Him. It's an abiding relationship, not just an experience, not a takeover, hallelujah, although we yield our all unconditionally to Him and adhere to that lovely exhortation in Romans chapter 12 where He says, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies. I may not just give your heart to Jesus, your body, the totality of your person, but He does not dominate, manipulate or control you, beloved.

Amen. He brings you into a living relationship with Himself. He keeps you, you keep yourself.

A wonderful life of constant and continual cooperation. Blessed be His name. And here's the last glorious statement.

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not. Amen. Now what does that mean, beloved? It means that Satan no longer has power over your life.

Now he can tempt you, Jesus was tempted in all things such as we are, yet he didn't sin. He can seek to trouble you in the realm of your body, beloved, in the realm of your soul, but he cannot penetrate the air of your spirit. And that's where the real you and the real me lives.

When you and I receive the Spirit of Christ into our spirits, that is into the temple of our person, beloved, everything that is alien to His nature goes out. He illustrated that in the cleansing of the temple. God will not tolerate, beloved, in you, in me, anything that is inconsistent with His own nature.

He cleanses the temple. Light and darkness don't dwell together. Christ and Belial, beloved, do not cohabit in the same house.

Glory be His name. It's either or. When God comes in by His Spirit, beloved, and begs, He gets you and me again, and makes us sons of God.

We're delivered from the indwelling presence of Satan. Amen. And set free, beloved, to be sons of God.

And as sons of God, we have the power to live as the Son of Man. I will never tire, beloved, in quoting that. Amen.

We sang the same thing in one of our hymns this morning. Bless the Lord. So there's the evidence, beloved, some of it, as to how I can be absolutely sure that I'm born again.

Why do I need to be born again? How can I be born again? What is the evidence, according to the Word of God, that I am born again? This is a wonderful book. I want to live and be according to the Scripture.

Nothing less.

Amen. Now we have reason to rejoice, beloved, if we know that those things are fundamentally true in our lives. We have no cause to despair if we're not in the fullness of the reality of that.

But that's what God has provided for us by sending Jesus into the world. That was the reason for which He was born, in order that you and I might be born again of the Spirit of God. Amen.

Sorry, it's five to one. Let us pray.

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