

# The Spirit Took Me Up

by Thomas Bradbury

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*The Holy Spirit is a distinct Person and a glorious Sovereign who plays a crucial role in creation, redemption, and regeneration.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 40:2, Psalm 139:23, Ezekiel 43:5, John 3:6, John 14:26, John 16:13, Romans 8:11, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Ephesians 2:6, Hebrews 9:14

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches about the essential role of the Holy Spirit in revealing God's truth and guiding believers in their spiritual journey. He emphasizes the need for the Spirit's presence and power in understanding Scripture, experiencing God's love, and deepening our relationship with Jesus. Bradbury highlights the Holy Spirit's work in creation, redemption, and regeneration, underscoring His sovereignty and vital role in the believer's life.

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## Transcript

"So the Spirit took me up." (Ezekiel 43:5)

Concerning God in revelation as well as in providence the words of Cowper are strikingly true,--

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,

And scan His work in vain;

God is His own interpreter,

And He will make it plain."

Without God's Spirit, God's Book is a perfect blank; without God's power, God's revelation of Himself is a perfect paradox. With the anointing, witness, and sealing of His blessed Spirit, all is plain and clear; and blessed with His presence and power, we may well sing, and sing intelligently too, the last verse of that precious hymn which has thrilled through many hearts since first it appeared in our new hymn book,--

"And Thou eternal Spirit vast,

What love can Thine transcend?

Since Thou Thy lot with me has cast,

Indwelling God and Friend."

It was not only necessary for God to give a gracious revelation of Himself in His own Book, the sacred Scriptures, but these writings must be breathed upon. See!

"The Spirit breathes upon the Word,

And brings the truth to sight."

This is according to the testimony given by Him through Paul to Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration (God-breathed) of God, and is profitable." (2 Tim. 3:16) No Scripture but that which is God-breathed to thee and to me, in thee and in me, is truly profitable. This leads to the person of Jesus, exalts Him in our affections, and gives us a sense of our own helplessness and ignorance--therefore the necessity of a Teacher, a Teacher sent from God, a Teacher who is God, God the ever-blessed Spirit.

Blessed with such a Teacher, we are led into a precious knowledge of Jesus our Husband, Head, and Saviour, and into experimental relationship with His Father and ours. We honour, adore, and praise the Eternal Spirit for His marvellous condescension in not only taking notice of poor, weak worms of the earth such as we feel ourselves to be, but in making these bodies of ours--which are styled in Phil. 3:21, "vile"--or, as it might be rendered, "this body of humiliation"--His abode.

O, it is wonderful to think that God the Father in His design of love and mercy should choose Himself an innumerable company of Adam's lost race on whom He would lavish all the love of His heart, and all the glories and honours of His kingdom. It is wonderful that God the Son should come to these lower scenes of night, and identify Himself with rebellious worms--bear their sins in His own body to the tree, all their sins--past, present, and to come; this is love indeed. But when we come to contemplate that grand, vast, and glorious new covenant design, that God the Holy Ghost, who hates and abhors the very mention of sin, should come and make our sinful bodies His abode, that in them He should prepare Himself a habitation in which to testify of Jesus' love, magnify the Father's grace, and abide until the last sigh escapes the quivering lips, and the ransomed spirit scars aloft to its native home, and to the bosom of its God.

The love of the Spirit is marvellous indeed. And yet it is wonderful to think that in this so-called Christian country--a country teeming with Bibles from John O' Groats to Land's End, a country abounding with so-called Christian temples--there is very little known of the person, power, and preciousness of the Holy Ghost. We can see lots of temples, but where is the glory? We can hear of many preachers, but where is the power? We have plenty of form, but where is the Spirit?

We hear much of God, but where is His sovereignty? Let me ask you--you who have been brought by the Holy Ghost to experience something of what you are in yourselves--wretched, corrupt, vile, and hell-deserving; you who have been sickened with the world through the revelation of Jesus' beauty, blessedness, and bounty; you who have wept in spirit with your suffering Lord in the depths of Gethsemane; you who have ascended the heights of Calvary and beheld Incarnate Love bleeding and dying for you; you who have been brought by Him into His banqueting house, to look up and see the banner of everlasting love; as you pass on from place to place, hoping to meet with those who love and fear Him, what meets your gaze?

Ichabod in the pulpit, Ichabod in the pew, Ichabod upon almost everything bearing the name of religion. Why is this? In tracing matters up to their original source, we can sing with the redeemed Atheist.

"Up to the Father's high decree

Each act in time I trace;

Up to the glorious Sovereign Three,

Almighty Fount of grace."

We bow our heads, and our hearts are melted in true worship and adoration before the revelation of His glorious sovereignty. He does as He will with thee and with me; as we see in 1 Cor. 4:7, "Who maketh thee to differ?" or, as you read in the margin, "Who distinguisheth thee?" O what distinguishing grace is experienced when God the ever-blessed Spirit testifies to our hearts of the love, blood, beauty, and bounty of Jesus, the blessings of our Father's house and kingdom, and the glorious prospect before us, when, divested of the burden of the flesh, and for ever done with sins, doubts, fears, anxieties, cares, and tears, we shall see Him in His own glory-home, and love Him and adore Him with unsinning hearts for ever.

Look for a moment at that glorious doxology which is chanted or read in every place of worship in connection with the Establishment: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." "Glory be to the Father." "What for? Well, we can answer. For His pure electing love. To whom? To the elect. Wait a moment, my friend. This is it: "Glory be to the Father" for His electing love to me. "Glory be to the Son."

What for? For His redeeming love. To whom? Everybody? Lay that on one side. To the elect? Come a little closer home. Christ's redemption is not only particular, but personal, for which every child of God blesses and praises Him in His glorious sanctuary. "Glory be to the Holy Ghost." Why? Because of His regenerating, comforting, confirming, and sealing favour. "As it was in the beginning;" before the world was; "is now, and ever shall be." What shall ever be? Glory to the Eternal Three.

Not glory to One at the expense of the other. Not glory to Two and One forgotten, but glory be to the covenant Three-in-One-JEHOVAH, who has secured the everlasting salvation and glorification of that innumerable company whom He in the riches of His grace styles "His own elect;" "My redeemed;" "The living in Jerusalem." It is our mercy in Grove Chapel to worship the covenant Three, and to hold, maintain, and confess in the spirit, if not in the words of one of the creeds of England's Church: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who, with the Father and the Son together, is worshipped and glorified."

It is ours to worship Him; it is ours to glorify Him, for He glorifies not Himself; He speaks not of Himself, but He speaks of God's Christ; and as He glorifies God's Christ in our heart's experience, we cannot help but praise and adore Him for the rich revelation of God's everlasting covenant of grace, and also to pray to Him to make to our waiting hearts further discoveries of the Three-in-One-JEHOVAH as all our salvation and all our desire. These preliminary remarks have been called forth through my seeing and enjoying the glorious harmony of Godhead as set forth in the precious verse in which our text appears. Now, in humble and pure dependence upon the guidance, grace, and goodness of God the Holy Ghost, let us seek a Father's blessing in meditating thereon. We notice:

I. THE SPIRIT'S PERSONALITY AND WORK--"The Spirit."

## II. EZEKIEL'S CHARACTER AND PRIVILEGE--"So the Spirit took me up."

I. THE SPIRIT'S PERSONALITY AND WORK--"The Spirit." Turn with me to Gen. 1:1,2, where you find the personality of the Spirit of God and His work in creation. But first of all, mark well the language of inspiration in this record of creation's work, and see if you cannot notice some analogy between it and the new creation in your own experience. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Mark! God is the Creator. "And the earth was without form and void." God created chaos, God created confusion. "And darkness was upon the face of the deep." Look at yourselves in the first throes and anxieties of regeneration. What do you experience? "Without form and void." Where are you? In darkness and the deep. What deep? Is it not the deep of Divine mystery opened by the Holy Ghost to your wondering and astonished gaze? You see yourselves sinners in the sight of a just and holy God. Sinners in thought, purpose, imagination, and desire, and wonder what must be the issue of it all. Will it be death? See! "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." He is a life-breathing, light-giving, and love-inspiring Spirit. In the new creation there are feelings, hopes, anxieties, cares, and doubts which were never experienced before. Before the Holy Ghost brooded over you and in you, you had no thoughts after God, no desire for His company, no longing for fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, no wish to be reckoned one with His despised yet highly-honoured people, no inclination to be found in His courts seeking His face in the midst of His worshipping children. Such is the case of all by nature. But where are you now? Ready to say to any favoured sinner who will deign to speak to you,

"Tell Him when you see His face,

I long to see Him too."

"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." This really means, "And the Spirit of God brooded over chaos." Why? For the formation of that which was formless. For the perfecting of that which was unperfect. For the production of order out of disorder. You see something of this in Isaiah 43:1, "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel." He does not say, that created thee, O Israel; but, "that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel." That word formed may be very well rendered "fashioned, or perfected." Brought from ugliness to beauty, from confusion to order, from darkness to light, from the experience of death to the enjoyment of life. Look through the Scriptures and there you see the Holy Ghost revealed as a true, proper, and real Person, and not as you may oftentimes hear Him spoken of from the pulpit and in prayer meetings from the lips of those from whom we might expect something better and clearer, as a mere influence. I hear sometimes persons praying for the influence of the Holy Ghost. I recollect the time when I used these words, but I knew not for what I asked. Such a prayer expressed not the depths of my need, nor the height of blessing which God reveals in the hearts of His children. What is the desire of the living in Jerusalem? That which is expressed in the last line of the verse before quoted,

"Indwelling God and Friend."

It is the indwelling of God the Holy Ghost, not His influence, that living souls desire. Influences will never satisfy the regenerate children of God.

Throughout the sacred Scriptures we have His personality set before us. Not only in creation, but in communication and communion. Every communication of grace from JEHOVAH, the Fountain Head of all blessing, is by the adorable Spirit. Look at Matthew 28:19. Here we find the baptizing of the nations was to be in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Here we have a question: If the Lord

Jesus Christ commanded the ordinance of baptism to be administered in the name of the Divine Three, how is it that we have not a solitary instance recorded in "The Acts of the Apostles" of their so doing, but always in the name of the Lord Jesus? There is a reason; may God enable you to seek it out. See! Whatever others may in their honest convictions maintain, I believe that this refers to the teaching, making disciples, or Christians, of all the nations of the saved, (Rev. 21:24; 22:2) and the baptism of them by the Holy Ghost into the Father's electing love, the Son's redeeming grace, and the Spirit's regenerating favour. Look again at the apostolic benediction: (2 Cor. 13:14) "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Again: (Col. 2:2, "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." It does not say, "The mystery of the Father, and of Christ, and of God," but "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Paul, by Divine inspiration, names the Holy Ghost first, and does not style Him the Holy Ghost, the Spirit, or the Comforter, but God. To Paul the Holy Ghost was God; God, as much as the Father; God, as much as the Son; God, in His eternal oneness with the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost is God.

I wish you to notice another portion of God's Word. See Isaiah 48:16. Who is the speaker? The prophet? No. The Father? No. The Spirit? No. It is the Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is the speaker. At ver. 12 and 13, He says, "Hearken unto Me, O Jacob and Israel, My called; I am He; I am the First, I also am the Last. My hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together." Who can this be but JEHOVAH-JESUS, the Creator and Upholder of all things. He speaks in ver. 16: "Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I; and now the Lord GOD and His Spirit hath sent Me." JEHOVAH-JESUS, the Creator and Upholder of all things, positively declares that the Father and the Spirit sent Him, commissioned Him, qualified Him to the accomplishment of salvation, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, and the safe conduct to eternal glory of all those who in the covenant of grace were committed to His care and keeping. Passages might be multiplied which clearly reveal the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost, and yet His undivided, co-equal, and co-eternal oneness with the Father and the Son, but time forbids.

Mark this well. No act in creation, no act in redemption, no act in regeneration, no act in providence, can be performed without Him. Not one. None in creation? No. If you will turn to Psalm 33:6, you will see how the glorious Trinity is revealed in the work of creation: "By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the Breath of His mouth." You may legitimately read this, "by the Spirit of His mouth." Now come to the New Testament. In John 3:8, we read: "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 every one that is born of the Spirit." The same word is given all through the New Testament for wind and Spirit. If you will look into the Popish version of the Bible, you will see this verse rendered, as the Papists do not believe: "The Spirit breatheth where He will." There is no figure of speech in the Popish rendering of this passage, but a plain, unmistakable declaration of the Spirit's sovereignty. "The Spirit breatheth where He will." He adores one part of creation with beauty, and leaves another part in dreariness and desolation. In the manifestation of the new creation, He breathes and communicates eternal life to whom He will. Not to one pew, but to one person in the pew, while the others are left in a dead profession. He enters an establishment, workshop, office, or house, where two are working or waiting; He takes one and reveals to him the wonders of electing and redeeming love; He leaves the other in the darkness of ignorance, to the silence of eternal despair. He enters a chamber where a husband and wife are in one bed; one, by the Spirit's sovereign grace and power, is lifted out of self into Christ, and rises to life and joys eternal, while

the other--Oh! painful and piercing declaration, but marvellous truth--the other sinks down into everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. Friend! thou who art sitting at ease in that pew, in reference to these things, where art thou? In regard to the Spirit's indwelling and teaching, where art thou? In respect to His communications, and to thy standing as a poor lost son or daughter of Adam, where art thou? As to the Spirit's manifestation of Jesus' salvation, Jesus' righteousness, Jesus' intercession, and Jesus' glory in prospect, where art thou? These are solemn questions; may the blessed Spirit graciously answer them for thee and in thee.

It is a rich and precious privilege for me to know the Holy Ghost as a distinct Person and a glorious Sovereign. Creation, redemption, and providence without Him are blanks indeed. Now look at that portion which I quoted before in Isaiah 48:16, "And now the Lord God and His Spirit hath sent Me." Just couple this with Isaiah 61:1, the portion read by our Lord in the synagogue of Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek." Now look at this portion as our Lord read it, and as the Spirit records it in Luke 4:18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor." Not only anointed by the Father with the Holy Ghost, but anointed by the Holy Ghost. This is revealed in the Person and work of Jesus from the virgin's womb to the virgin tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, in which never man lay. Come with me to Luke 1:35, where we find the record of that which is stated in the chaste and guarded language of England's Te Deum: "When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb." Just think, that the Spirit of purity, the Spirit of holiness should descend to such a marvellous depth as this. Read the communication of the angel to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." By the direct operation of God the Holy Ghost, the sinless, spotless, immaculate, and impeccable humanity of our blessed Lord and Saviour was produced. See! "And the Child grew, and waxed strong in Spirit." (Luke 2:40)

Turn to Matt. 3, where we behold Him ascending the banks of the Jordan after His baptism, and receiving His commission openly before all the people. The voice from the excellent glory declares, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And, blessed be His holy name, He is well pleased with all those whom He sees in Him. With the voice there was the Holy Ghost descending upon Him in a bodily shape like a dove. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil, for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38) Look at the commencement of His doing good publicly. "Then," at the very moment of His anointing; "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." (Matt. 4:1) He was led up, not down. All the way through His humiliation and temptation was upward, not downward, though Satan would have us believe it was so. Excelsior was the inscription upon the banner of Incarnate Love, the true meaning of which is, the highest. The Spirit led Jesus up into the wilderness. Is that a fact? Yes, for no act in redemption or in the accomplishment of the glorious righteousness for His people was performed independently of the Spirit of the living God. O wonderful leading! O marvellous grace of the Holy Ghost to lead a precious Christ into all the wilderness wanderings and temptations of His people, knowing that they would be brought to experience the perplexities of many a wilderness down here. "To be tempted of the devil." "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. 4:15; 2:18)

Did He cast out devils and heal sinners who were oppressed by them? Read for yourselves Matt. 12, Mark 3, and Luke 11, and you will see that by the Spirit of God He cast them out. Do you glory in the fact that by Christ's one offering you are perfected for ever? Turn with me to Heb. 9:14, where you read that this was all through the eternal Spirit: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The blood of Christ was shed and the sacred humanity of Jesus was offered up to His Father for His people through the grace and power of His co-equal, God the Holy Ghost. Was Jesus raised from the dead? It was by the quickening power of the Spirit. See Rom. 1:4, "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." When He ascended on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, His first bestowal of them was when He poured out the Holy Ghost upon three thousand on the day of Pentecost. Blessed be His holy name, the Holy Ghost is seen and acknowledged by elect, redeemed, and regenerate souls in every point and in every particular of the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now notice how He is revealed in the work of regeneration. It is necessary for our peace and confidence that we should have right views and conceptions upon this matter. What is regeneration? Not the remodeling of the old nature. Not the beautifying of the old man. Not the adorning of religious human nature. Not the rectifying or renovation of the flesh. Oh, no! But an eternal, irreversible act of JEHOVAH, never to be repeated or abolished. It is the bestowal of a new heart, the communication of a new life, the imparting of a new nature. It is the implantation of something mysterious to those who possess the same. Peter speaks of the saints being "partakers of the Divine nature." (2 Pet. 1:4) Paul writes of it thus: "Christ in you the Hope of glory." (Col. 1:27) This reminds me of the saying of a poor creature once to me, and I believe there is more pure, Scriptural, and spiritual Divinity in what some poor, illiterate creatures say than there is in what may so-called free-grace preachers can declare in a twelvemonth. She said, "The new birth to me is nothing more and nothing less than the bringing forth of a precious Christ in my heart's affections." Do you want anything more than that? Will anything short of it satisfy the cravings of that spiritual appetite created within you by God the ever-blessed Spirit? You answer unhesitatingly, No! You may depend upon, if Christ is formed and brought forth in you the Hope of glory, it will be accompanied with many pangs, much wrestling and struggling, and fierce opposition from the flesh, caused by the intense hatred of Satan to the Christ of God.

Mark! In the work of regeneration the Holy Ghost is the active Person and gracious Performer. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6) "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." (John 6:63) "The Holy Ghost shall teach you all things." (John 14:26) "He shall testify of Me." (John 15:26) See how the Lord Jesus describes His work in John 16:7-15. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you. And when He is come He will reprove (margin--convince) the world of sin." What world? That which the Father loves and the Son saves. (John 3:16; 4:42) "He will convince the world of sin." That is chaos in the new creation. "And of righteousness, and of judgment." Is this the judgment to come? No, not at all, though I have often heard this portion misquoted, especially in prayer meetings. Even at these meetings I have been astonished to hear so much unscriptural language. Persons pray thus, O send thy Spirit to convince of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment to come. I do not desire to be convinced of the judgment to come, for such is not according to the teaching of our blessed Lord and Master. He said, "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." In the atoning death of the Surety of the everlasting covenant and the Representative of God's elect, Satan was judged, and his designs against the Church rendered ineffectual. In the righteousness of Christ, or in Christ our Righteousness, all elect sinners are judged, and

JEHOVAH'S judgment is, Everlasting acquittance and clearance from sin and from all Satan's accusations. With the knowledge of this, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the darkness is past and the True Light now shineth.

What know we of the blessed Spirit as the Convincer of sin, the Convincer of righteousness, and the Convincer of judgment? "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." God's living children oftentimes mourn over the accursed sin of unbelief. Here is a Bible full of promises, the Bible full of blessings, the Bible full of consolations; yet, left to ourselves, what are we? Weak and helpless, not able to claim a single promise, blessing, or consolation. Ah, my dear friend, thou who art in darkness, distress, and doubt through manifold temptations; thou who through the fear of God in thee, the honesty of thy new nature, and the teaching of the blessed Spirit, cannot appropriate a single promise and say it is thine, remember this: "He shall convince of sin, because they believe not on Me. Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more." Because He completed His work of obedience and sacrifice, being faithful to Him that appointed Him. "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." All the sins of all God's people put away for ever, an end made of them--thrown into the depths of the sea of eternal oblivion--cast behind God's back--God's children do not want to see His back, and He is determined they shall see His face. See! Clouds and darkness are round about Him, and if we enter into His sacred presence to partake of the blessings of covenant grace and mercy, we must pass through the cloud. Do you not remember Luke 9:34, when the three favoured disciples on Tabor's mount saw the glory of Jesus? But, "while He thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered the cloud." So do I, and I am not the only one within these walls tonight who fears on entering any dark or gloomy spot in the pathway of tribulation. It would be an awful sign if we knew nothing of the fear peculiar to the experiences of God's living children. Yet this is their security and confidence--regeneration by the Spirit, restoration by the Spirit, confirmation by the Spirit, and sealing by the Spirit unto the day of redemption. O what mercy to poor, lost, and ruined sinners! Is it not astonishing that so much ignorance prevails in reference to the personality and work of God the Holy Ghost? Passage after passage of God's Word come crowding into my mind which would still further prove His person, power, and preciousness as displayed and experienced throughout the whole scheme of redeeming love and favour. Let us now notice,

II. EZEKIEL'S CHARACTER AND PRIVILEGE--"So the Spirit took me up." Turn to chap. 1:3. The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest. Ezekiel was a legally qualified priest and prophet of the LORD to communicate the LORD'S mind and will; yet, though so highly honoured he felt his daily need of the Spirit's restoring and reviving power. "The Spirit took me up." This language is proof positive that he was down. Are you always up, rejoicing on the mount of covenant favour, and feeding amid the fat pastures of God's Israel? Are you always rejoicing in the assurance of His love? You know very well you are not, neither do you want a minister in the pulpit who professes such high favours. "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." (Psalm 55:19) But with the godly it is not so. As in creation and providence, so in grace; He sends darkness and it is night wherein the beasts of the forest do prowl for their prey. He sends His stormy wind from His fists and the spiritual mariners in the deep sea of vital experience "mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end." (Ps. 107:26,27) Then look at the creeping things in this deep sea. Pride, deceit, conceit, selfishness, hatred, malice, uncharitableness. When left without the special grace and favour of God the ever-blessed Spirit, pride, self-will, and self-assertion are sure to abound. Ezekiel was down in a great deep when the Spirit of God first moved over the deep of conviction and soul trouble, the deep discovered by the revelation of JEHOVAH'S fiery law to his heart. David speaks of this in Psalm 40:2, "He brought me up also out of an

horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Look again at Psalm 61:2, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

"So the Spirit took me up." He gave Ezekiel a clean lift out of himself, out of his rebelliousness, out of his hot anger, out of his self-will, and commissioned him to go forth and prophesy to the children of the captivity. Look at chapter 3:14, how the Spirit deals so graciously with His ill-tempered prophet: "So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit (margin--hot anger) but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me." Ezekiel was determined not to go, God was determined that Ezekiel should go. A Stronger than the strong was found with and in him, and He must do His bidding. When the Spirit comes with His gracious communications to the heart of one of God's children, rise that child must and enter into the experimental possession of the bounties and blessings which He graciously gives. And does not the Spirit favour us with many a gracious lift? Sometimes our hearts are as heavy as lead, our spirits are sad and sorrowful, but ere we are aware, the blessed Spirit, without a word from the pulpit, gives us a heart-melting view of our best Friend. Then our spirits glow with gratitude, our eyes overflow with tears, and we find it.

"Sweet to lie passive in His hands,

And know no will but His."

Yes, and as we have listened to the outpouring of the burdened heart from the pulpit, declaring the grace and glory of Jesus, tracing out the footsteps of the flock, and describing that very experience wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, we have been lifted up out of darkness into light, out of bondage into liberty, out of condemnation into justification, out of wretched self into a glorious Christ. "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." (2 Cor. 5:5) "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:6) Blessed Spirit! Gracious lift! Glorious ascent!

Yet the morrow with its cares and anxieties will be dreaded, the temptations of the path experienced, and tribulations of the journey homeward encountered; but God knows all about them, and faithful to His promise, will remain our God and Guide for ever and ever.

May God the Holy Ghost seal us and bless us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/thomas-bradbury/the-spirit-took-me-up/>

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