

Gospel Meetings-Shannon Hills 06

by Worth Ellis

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual birth for eternal life and warns against the dangers of living without it.

Duration: 54:39

Scripture: Jeremiah 23:29, John 1:11, John 3:1, John 3:3, John 16:8, Romans 6:23, Romans 10:9, Hebrews 4:13

Topics: "Born Again", "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being born again in order to see and enter the Kingdom of God. He explains that being born again means surrendering to God and accepting Jesus as one's Savior. The preacher also highlights three reasons why being born again is necessary: to leave behind one's past, to receive eternal life and forgiveness of sins, and to be accepted by God. He supports his message with references to John 16:8 and the first chapter of the Gospel.

Transcript

Our reading tonight, in our Bible, from the Gospel according to John, chapter three, the third chapter of the Gospel according to John. And our reading commences at verse one. John three, one.

Shall we pray? Holy Father, we lift our hearts to Thee tonight in thanksgiving and in gratitude for the gift of the Son of Thy love. We thank Thee tonight, Father, for the blessedness of the knowledge of sin forgiven. We thank Thee that through Thy word it might please Thee this night to reveal this blessed truth to many hearts here.

Honor the word, Father, we beseech Thee, and glory for Thy well-beloved Son. Amen. There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, the 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 didst except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.

So is every one 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 or a teacher 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? And 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 eternal life. For God so loved the world, 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.

He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. May God bless to us tonight the reading of his own word. If you are here tonight in our service, and you are concerned about becoming a Christian in the scriptural sense of the word, if you would like to know that all of your sins are forgiven, that you are justified in the sight of God and ready for heaven, regardless of when the time might come for your departure, I have some good news for you.

This can be your present and joyous possession before you leave this building tonight. You can know without a shadow of a doubt that every one of your sins are completely and eternally forgiven, that you have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son, that you have been justified freely by the redemption that is in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that's through the grace of God. You can have all of this absolute assurance of heaven without joining the Church, without being baptized, without paying, without praying, or without playing.

Every bit of it can be yours without any of these things. But you cannot have the first one of these, let alone all of them, unless you are born again, and that on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, who says in verse 5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And furthermore, in verse 3, "Except a man be born again, not only will he not enter, but he shall not even so much as get out of the kingdom of God." And that's the solemn authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now, I would like to state the burden of my message tonight.

In other words, what I'm shooting at. In case I get mixed up on the way and get lost, you will at least know what I was trying to get across to you when I started. And it's this, that just as physical life has a moment, a very definite and specific moment of beginning, also spiritual life that fits us for heaven and to endure the celestial realms of glory with the Lord Jesus Christ and all of the redeemed throughout the countless ages of eternity must have a very definite and a specific beginning.

You won't slip up on it, and neither will it slip up on you. It will be the direct result of an intelligent decision to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. An abundant testimony to this blessed truth is found in Holy Writ that eternal life and the forgiveness of sin is always inseparably associated with verse.

Now turn, please, to the first chapter of this gospel, and I want you to notice with me three verses. Speaking in verse 11 of the first chapter, we read these words concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice very carefully now, he came unto his own, or his own things, and his own received him not, his own people.

That is, the Jews rejected him. But notice in verse 12, as many as received him, to them gave he power or the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name, which were born. And align that phrase now.

To as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the children of God, even to them that believed on his name, which were born, not of blood. That means you can't inherit it. Nor of the will of man.

No man can make you a Christian. Nor of the will of the flesh, rather. That is, you can't make yourself a Christian.

And thirdly, nor of the will of man. No one can confer Christian faith upon you. But tie these two statements together, dear friends, will you? To as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the children of God, even to them that believed on his name, which were born of God.

Three negatives, one positive. To as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believed, which were born of God. Now, I do not understand how anyone can possibly fail to see that to become a real child of God and be a member of the family of God is inseparable, at least with the birth, from God.

In Galatians chapter 3, the Bible says we all become the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. There is not a more spurious doctrine out of the very pits of hell than the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. I have some brothers, but I only have two that are alive.

And they are the only living male members of the whole human race that are brothers to me today, in that sense of the word, because they were born into my family. I believe in the fatherhood of God in relation to his creation inasmuch as he is the God in whom we all live and move and have our beings. But the fatherhood of God in connection with the Bible, sense of the word, is something we enter into through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, because notice this, for as many as received him through them gave he the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name, which were born of God.

You can't get to heaven without being born again, friend. Never. You'll miss it ten million miles if you fail to experience this glorious truth of the new birth.

In the first epistle of John, you needn't turn to it, but I'd like to read you a phrase or two from this epistle. And this epistle of John has to do primarily with the family of God. He uses such words as these in writing to the Christians, John says, My little children.

Notice the language, My little children. And again he says, Little children. And over and over again he uses phrases like that.

Seven times in the first epistle of John we find these words, Born of God. Two times the word, Begotten of God. And it's exactly the same thing.

Born of God and begotten of God. When the beloved apostle Peter, who in connection with his restoration or his being turned again, sought to strengthen his brethren to carry out his divine commission, he wrote his epistle to Christians at large. And he said, As new born vain, seek ye therefore the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.

James, in his epistle, chapter one, in verse eighteen, says, speaking of God, of his own will beget he us with the word of the truth. And again we read in 1 Peter that we are born again, not of the incorruptible seed, but not of corruptible seed rather, but by the incorruptible, by the word of God, that liveth and abideth forever. Now this overwhelming volume of evidence substantiates our claim tonight that not the first son of Adam's race will ever know that sins are forgiven, will never have peace with God, will never be shoot of heaven, and never enjoy eternal bliss with the Lord Jesus and the host of the redeemed, except you have been born again.

May I remind you of these words again? Notice, will you please, in John 3, 3, Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, of a truth, of a truth, that's a double positive. The Lord Jesus is speaking to emphatically emphasize this truth. Here comes this man, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court of the days of our Lord Jesus Christ, a teacher of the Mosaic law to the nation of Israel.

And he being a teacher, and here is the Son of God, who was a great teacher, and I can imagine that this dear man came to the Lord Jesus because he thought perhaps we might swap a little of our knowledge. He came to the Son of God by night, and he said, Master, others may doubt you, but I know you've convinced me that you're a teacher come from God, for no man could possibly do the miracles that you're doing if God were not with him. And the Son of God, never for one moment would he think of accepting such a compliment from the hand of a man who was on his way to hell without setting him right.

And with those all-seeing eyes of his and with love and compassion, he looked right down into the very depths of the heart of this Pharisee, this good, self-righteous, moral, religious man. And here is what he said, Nicodemus, what you need, my friend, is not education, but regeneration, for man cannot apprehend by the intellect the new birth. Ritual truth is always apprehended by faith.

The Bible says, By grace are you saved through faith, and that knowledge of yourself. It is the gift of God. And a very elementary and simple definition of faith is to believe God and to take Him at His word, although you can't understand it.

Now, if I spent all my time scratching this noggin of mine trying to figure out the truth of the gospel, I wouldn't have any time left to enjoy preaching it. Why, if you asked me tonight, were it? Why did God love such a hell-deserving sinner like you? I'd say, friend, I haven't the least idea. Why did He send His Son to the cross to die there such a shameful death that a poor, wicked infidel like you might be saved? I don't know.

All I can say is that God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. And the only one word I know that answers all the hard questions is this word, love. Herein is love, not that we loved Him but that He loved us.

Take His Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins and not for our sins only but also for the sins of the whole world. God committeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Oh, the simplicity, oh, the grandeur, the splendor of the gospel message that thou shalt confess with thy

mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead.

Thou shalt, emphatic, be saved, present possession, right now, if you believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ was crucified for your sins and was raised again for your justification, God says you have eternal life. And all of this can be yours only if you experience this glorious truth called the new birth. I notice in this text alone that we read together tonight, this section, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 times the word born is used in the Nicodemus sermon that the Lord Jesus preached to this self-righteous Pharisee.

Born eight times, except the man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Now, may I ask you a very simple question. As you sit there tonight and listen to this message, what should you ask yourself? What do you think would be the best question you could put to your own self? Would it be, have I joined the church? Have I been baptized? Do I give a tenth of my money to the Lord? Do I pray enough? Do I read the Bible enough? I ask you, friend, in the light of this overwhelming volume of undeniable evidence, isn't the only sensible question that you should be found asking yourself tonight this, have I been born again? For the Lord Jesus said, except the man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Now, you know, there are two questions, so far as I can see in connection with this narrative. And upon these two rests the entire fabric of the subject of the new birth. The questions asked and the correct answers given will show us what it means to be born again.

Now, the first question he asked, obviously, was why. That's inferred in verse 6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Now, Nicodemus had said in verse 4, how can a man be born when he is old? So he asked him, first of all, why must I be born again? Secondly, how can I be born again? Nicodemus was an honest sinner.

And I tell you, God does not object at all to your questions, so long as your questions are honest and above board. Any sinner who will receive the word of God in a good and honest heart will be saved before he leaves this meeting tonight. He will be born again of the incorruptible seed by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever.

And if you have an honest question tonight, why not like Nicodemus say, Lord, why must I be born again? Why? The Lord had convinced Nicodemus of his authority as a teacher, but the very moment, with his all-seeing eyes, he proved right into the very vital being of this man, Nicodemus, he struck a new chord. He awakened an interest that this man had never known before. If a man like me, a member of the Jewish Supreme Court, a teacher of the law of Moses, a ruler of the Jews, whose life apparently was absolutely above board, irreproachable, if that will not qualify me to enter the kingdom of God, then, Lord, why? Why must I be born again? Now, in verse 6, the Lord Jesus gets right down to the very heart of this question, and he tells Nicodemus this.

The reason you need to be born again, Nicodemus, is simply because that which is born of the flesh is flesh. Now, under Landau's words, and in the Epistle to the Corinthians, we read that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. In other words, friends, it's just as simple as this.

Just as you have had birth in the natural order of things, which fits you for life on this planet here, you must have a new birth from God to fit you for life hereafter. Strange to say, many, many sinners who entertain a very fond hope of getting to heaven can't even spend 30 minutes in the presence of a child of God. And if you tie their hands behind their back and chain them to a seat in a prayer meeting, they'd be a raven maniac before an hour was gone.

And yet, they feel that all they've got to do is to do the best they can and I'll get to heaven. Well, bless your heart, sinner. Through the countless ages of eternity, there'll be one long, mighty crescendo of praise and glory of being astride to the Son of God in one long, unending, never-ceasing prayer meeting in heaven.

Now, if you could get there, see, and have to live through eternity in an atmosphere like that with the same kind of nature you've got in you right now, I respectfully submit to you that heaven will be hell. Would you agree? In other words, you must be born again because you must be capacitated to enjoy heaven. What good would it do you to have your sins forgiven here and go to heaven and not be able to enjoy it throughout all eternity? Now, has there ever been a circumstance, naturally speaking, on this earth in which you have found yourself that the physical members of your being with which God endowed you by natural generation have not equipped you to meet that situation? All factors considered being equal, of course.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. Physical birth fits you for life here. Spiritual birth fits you for life in heaven.

Heaven to you would be hell without being born again, and that's it. Of course, you didn't worry about that. You won't get there anyway unless you're born again.

Now, the reason why you must be born again, the Lord Jesus said, that which is born of the flesh is flesh. Now, sometimes the Bible, by the word flesh, simply means meat, just like that you see here, or just like this. Again, the Bible means all humanity when it says flesh.

For example, as in Genesis 6, 13, the Lord says, The end of all flesh is come before me. He was about to bring down the deluge, you remember, and destroy all the living creatures on the earth except Noah and his family and the animals that went into the ark. Sometimes he means meat.

Sometimes the Bible, by the word flesh, means humanity. But other times, and often in the New Testament, especially, when you find the word flesh, it means neither humanity in general, nor meat like theirs, but it simply means the corrupt principle and the depraved faculties of our fallen nature. And that's what the Lord Jesus Christ meant here.

Within this bosom of mine, I have a heart, and my heart is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things. Who can know it? God knows my heart. Before I became a Christian, my heart was absolutely under the control of Satan.

If Satan said, Curse and swear, I did it. If he said, Drink, I drank. If he said, Gamble, I gambled.

If he said, Fight, I fought. But now that I have been born again by the Spirit of God, I still have that nature within me. But the glorious principle of the Christian faith through regeneration and the new birth is this, that all of the natural tendencies and propensities of the human heart are subjugated by and subordinated to the new nature.

And that's what makes a man a new creature in the Lord Jesus Christ. The most ridiculous and preposterous assumption that a man could possibly be guilty of is to assume that he's a child of God if his life has not been absolutely, erratically, completely transformed. The Bible says, Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

All things pass away and all things become new in that man's life. And I like that verse. Now, theologians, bless your heart, I know it's a positional verse.

It speaks of being taken out of the family of Adam and placed in the family of Christ where all things are new. But you will have to, in turn, grant me this, that every positional blessing is supposed to be exhibited practically in our daily walk. Therefore, if any man is a genuine Christian, all things must pass away out of his life.

God forbid, said Paul in Romans 6, how that staff can such ones as we who have died two sins live in a longer therein. And I'm going to stick my short neck out and not much to be cut off in a way and say it's impossible for a genuine child of God to live in sin. Don't believe it.

Set your heart tonight professing believer and see whether you've been born again by the Spirit of God and the Word of God or whether you've been deceived by Satan into believing that you're a child of God. And if you're constantly faced with all the trials and the vicissitudes of life and all these temptations come crowding in upon you and you have absolutely no victory and no defense and no bulwark thrown up against them, then you have not the Holy Spirit of God living within you. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Bible says the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up the standard against him and the child of God can live a victorious life thanks be unto God which always causes us to triumph in pride.

But your problem, my friend, may not be one primarily of the practical side of Christianity, but most likely you have never gotten off to a good start. You've never been born again. That may be your problem tonight.

And so the Lord says to Nicodemus, that which is born of the flesh, in other words, this evil, corrupt, depraved nature of mine that lives in this heart of mine, that can never be anything else. See? Now, here's something you need to learn in connection with becoming a Christian. Nowhere in the Word of God do we read that God ever intended to improve on this old nature of mine.

As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches me that it's going to become more and more corrupt as the days go by. And the older I get in the Lord, the worse it is. I'll never forget once, I don't know whether I was comfortable or whether I was confounded, but I was suffering under the flesh, you know, and I just learned after I got to be a Christian that I had two natures.

You know, sometimes people who get saved think when you become a Christian, well, it's all over. The sky is fine, the sky, and it's like a bed of roses. No more trouble.

Well, bless your heart, if you've been saved that long, you better watch out because you're going to bust a skin on your nose when you hit the ground when you come down. And you're going to find out after the initial ecstatic joy of your conversion to Christ, when the first, that blessed joy and assurance of sin forgiven floods your soul, you're going to find out that you've still got the old nature that you had that kept your nose to the grindstone of seeing all days of your life. And this dear old brother, I don't even remember who he was.

He was a patriarch of some kind, came to our church. Yeah, oh, he was a fine old gentleman. He'd been saved 60 or 70 years, if I remember correctly.

And I said, here's a man who will give me some help. And I was like Paul, all wretched men that I am. Who shall deliver me from this body of corruption? And I was just burdened down under the stints of the fact

that I had this filthy, miserable, depraved flesh still within me.

I went to this dear old brother one night for the message. I said, brother, look, how old do you have to get before you get through with this awful, putrefying, stinking, rotten mess of this flesh inside of me? It worries me to death all day long. He said, well, brother, I'm afraid I can't give you much help.

I'm afraid I can't give you much help. I've been saved 60 years now. Mine's worse than it was the first day I was saved.

Oh, let's remember this. It's with you. It's with you.

This evil flesh. The Lord Jesus said that which is born of flesh is flesh. He's not going to improve upon that.

That flesh was condemned when Jesus died on the cross and forever set aside. That's the Edenic order of things. And then your birth is a bringing in of something that's entirely new.

It's the preaching within me, the Holy Spirit of the Living God, and that's regeneration. That's the motor dynamics of a new life. And if you're a perilous mess in your effort to live the kind of life you ought to live, it's because you haven't been born again, sinner.

You answer me a question, how in the name of common sense can the God of heaven and the person of the Holy Ghost live in a human body without that person being changed? To say that a Christian can live in sin is to say that God can sin. I don't say a Christian doesn't commit sin. I've tried very laboriously to make it very clear that this evil nature of ours is always with us and will always probably be groaning under us.

But the Lord said to Nicodemus, the reason you've got to be regenerated and born again, Nicodemus, is because the flesh will never be anything else but void again. Remember that. Well, some people try to cultivate the flesh.

Some people try to educate it. Now, I wonder what it does to flesh to educate it. We'll take this evil, depraved nature of mine, all of these faculties paralyzed by the indwelling principle of sin, all the base, lewd, immoral, corruptible, wicked thoughts that come clouding into this heart and mind day by day, and I'm constantly expressing them out.

I'm speaking from your own heart, am I not? Child of God, sinner also. All right, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take this flesh of mine.

Remember, I'm not talking about this. Do you understand what I mean now by flesh here? I'll take this evil nature of mine, with all of its wicked propensities, and I'll put them in grammar grade. I'll put them in high school and college and I'll graduate magna cum laude or some other kind of a law.

And when you get through with it, what have you got but educated flesh? And my Bible says educated flesh can't go to heaven. See? Now, some people say, well, if education won't do it, then surely religion will. So we'll put the little rascal in the cradle role and we'll bring him up under this environment of church.

We'll teach him to say little Bible verses and we'll teach him to sing songs, yes. We'll put him in Sunday school and church and pray with him every time the door opens and we'll get him so he can even stand up at the young people's meeting and give a right good little talk from the Bible. But when you get through

with it, you've got religious flesh and religious flesh can't be saved.

That's not salvation. So you can educate it, you can cultivate it, you can make it religious and when you get through with it, what have you got? Educated, cultivated and religious flesh. And flesh is nothing but flesh.

And that's why you must be born again. You know, I'm afraid you're not going to get this point so I'm going to give you one of my illustrations. The great danger in connection with evangelism today so far as I can personally see it and I'm not speaking as a man who enjoys any great deal of success as far as numbers are concerned that I can see is that of all the zealous Christian workers who put pressure on people.

Now, here's a man in the city. Let's say his church is having a revival. Well, let's pick up Forest Avenue Tabernacle.

It's not nice to talk about any other people. Let's talk about our own church. Some unlearned child of God here might get the idea.

Well, I know a fellow you know. You know all that rascal does. Hanging around down at Joe's pool room playing 8-ball.

No, it's not right. He should live on the same plane as I'm living. See? So he's one of these civic-minded churches.

And he's going to get Joe and he's going to take him and clean him up and get him in the church. Now, you know what he reminds me of? He reminds me of this story I either cooked up or read somewhere of a man who was traveling through the countryside one day and as he was riding along on a beautiful Sunday afternoon in the spring of the year when the clover was so green and all the trees were budding. You know, he's in such a happy frame of mind.

He was just filled with joy, you know. Just lilted along in his car. And as he drove along he looked and he saw a group of sheep in a field of clover.

Getting along just fine. And so he drove a little further and his wife was with him and they were mowing the countryside and pretty soon they came to another pasture but this was a different kind of pasture and down in the mud hole at the foot of the hill was a bunch of little pork chops grunting and just snorting and rooting around just having the time of their life. He saw one little fellow that was unusually cute and he was lying in a mud hole with his little curly tail sticking out one side of the hole of water and his mouth out the other.

But he said to his wife, dear, look, isn't it a crime shame? Why shouldn't he live in the clover like the pig he has a perfect life right, who doesn't he? Doesn't he? Aren't all animals created equal? Doesn't he have a perfect right to live in the clover? Why should he live down here in the mud hole when the sheep is living in the clover? I'm going to rectify that situation with this civic blood boiling in his self-righteous vein. He goes up to the farmer's house and he finds out to whom the pig belongs and he buys the pig. He puts him in the boot of his car and he carries him down to the YMCA.

He gives him a bath, he dresses him up and he's just as clean and so pretty and he ties a ribbon to his tail and this time he's so clean and smelling nice he puts him on the front seat and drives back out in the countryside. My, I'll tell you, bursting with civic pride and having made his contribution to the animal

kingdom with his heart filled with joy, he goes out in the countryside and he takes this pig and he places him right down, right in the middle of a group of sheep. Now the reason he put him in the middle is because he wanted him to get off to a good start.

And if you want to get a sin off to a good start, just let him join himself to a Christian community like this and sit him down in the middle of God's people without him being born again. You'll see what kind of start he gets off to. So, feeling so satisfied with himself and so happy, he goes home.

A day or two later he says to his wife, I think we should round the country and see how my protégé is getting along and so they go riding out through the countryside in the afternoon and he comes to where the sheep are. He can't see his little friend. And so he says, well I'm going, I know where he's at, right in the middle where the clover's the greenest and the nicest, right in the middle of all the sheep.

That's where he is because surely he would never leave such a peaceful surrounding as that. So he goes and he can't find his little pig and all of a sudden he sees his little dainty footprints making their way down the side of the hill underneath the fence and with many exemplars giving in his heart he goes a following up over the hill and down in another and is there a boy or girl tonight who would like to tell me where he found his pig? Where? In a mud hole? Sure enough. Now is there a boy or girl who would like to tell me why he found his pig in a mud hole? Why? May I tell you because pig is pig.

See? Now if miraculously if miraculously without going through all of this effort that man had some supernatural power to place within that pig a sheep nature and that pig had the intelligence to feed his sheep nature and starve feed his sheep nature and starve his pig nature you couldn't have gotten him out of the club could you? And that's goodbye. Did you get that point? I hate to be so corny but I want you to understand what I'm talking about. Now look friend bless your heart I like to talk to people like you because I know how you think I know how you see and I can almost think for you I've been right along there.

All these sensations of which your wicked soul craves mine has had them I've been along there I live for the first 27 years of my life nothing but the status of the cravings of this inner nature of mine see? Now do you think an intelligent human being would take a whiskey drinking bible disbelieving Christ denying blaspheming card playing infidel and put him in the middle of a group of Christians in a church and have little enough sense to think that was going to do you believe that? I don't either that's the reason Jesus said that which is born of the flesh is flesh and except a man be born again up from above he cannot enter into the kingdom of God that's why you must be born again Now I'm in no hurry tonight I promised to my dad I was going to quit early tonight but I don't think I'm going to make it but look let me ask you a question let me ask you a question now very carefully and you think this over and consider it will you? Do you honestly and sincerely think you'll ever be anything other than what you are or do anything other than what you're doing until God makes you something else besides what you are? Do you really believe that? See? All right why? That's it because that nature within you dear friend is going to be exactly what it is now and that's what makes you lost. That takes us right back to the point on the question of the night on the subject of sin the great problem of sin in the lives of people today is not so much a matter of conduct but it's condition. See? Now the pig he's been back to the mud hole because the pig feels more at home in the mud hole than he does in the clover and you feel more at home in a lot of places than you do here tonight.

Now that doesn't mean we're not glad to have you bless your heart we hope you'll come back tomorrow night. If you're honest you know what I'm talking about don't you? Do you understand what I mean now?

That which is born of flesh is flesh and it can't ever be anything else. See? But God wants to place within you tonight by His marvelous grace His own Holy Spirit.

See? And if He does you'll be born again and how does He do it? That's the second question. Alright Lord said Nicodemus you've convinced me. I believe now that all of my Jewish training and no matter if I am a teacher of Israel I can see that there's something lacking in my life.

And so Nicodemus says now how? Did you notice those words? How can these things be? In verse 9. That's a good question sinner. Ask the Lord tonight. Lord how can these things be? If what this man has been telling me is true and I realize that my problem is something wrong on the inside that keeps me from living the kind of life I would like to and I believe it's this very thing that robs me of the peace and joy that I need so badly in these troublesome times.

Lord how in the world can these things be that this man has been talking about? Right here is your answer. Now may I state this again. That natural birth is the beginning of physical life.

Spiritual birth is the beginning of spiritual life. And line upon line, precept upon precept here's how simple it is. Just as in natural generation there are two parents, a father and a mother.

Also in spiritual regeneration there are two parents and you have them very definitely stated here. Notice verse five. Jesus answered verily, verily I say unto thee except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Now while the literal method of interpretation of the Bible is the most sane and the most helpful and the happiest way to interpret it, we must remember this that all of the statements of the Bible and all the words are not to be taken literally. For example, in the word of God you can find this word water here in verse five used by the Lord Jesus Christ as a type of eternal life, as a type of the Holy Spirit of God, and in Ephesians chapter five and verse twenty six it's used as a picture or a type of the word of God. Now this, you see, because it's corroborated in other places, we place no other interpretation upon the word water than simply that the Lord Jesus meant to say to Nicodemus, except a man be born of the spirit of the Holy Spirit of God and the word of God, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Now Peter said in his first epistle, being born again of what? Of incorruptible seed by the word of God. See? Now there could be no argument about that, and in Ephesians chapter five when Paul was writing to the men folks at the church at Ephesus, he said, Husband, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself forth that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of the water by the word. See? And so it's perfectly obvious that the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, the how, Nicodemus, of the new birth, how are you going to get life from heaven and have your life entirely transformed? It's going to require two parables.

The first one is the Holy Spirit of God. The second one is the word of God. See? Now note it.

In Psalm 119 is the verse that says, The infancy of thy word giveth light. It giveth understanding. In Ephesians chapter four the Bible says the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than in the two-edged sword even to the dividing of some of the soul and the spirit and of the joints of the marrow, and is a good discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart.

Everything is naked and open under the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Thy word, O Lord, is like a hammer that breaketh a rock in twain. Now look.

We preach the gospel to you from the word of God and we tell you that the wages of sin is death, that the soul that sinneth it shall die. But we tell you that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, and Jesus died in your room and stared upon a criminal's cross. See? Now that's the message of the gospel.

And this word is used and owned and blessed by the Holy Spirit who makes it real to your heart. Now in John sixteen in verse eight the Bible says, When he, the spirit of God, is come, he will convince the world of sin. See? That's one of your parents.

In other words, friends, listen. Before there can be birth, there must be travail. Therefore, there must be definite conviction of sin before one can be saved.

It is absolute spiritual suicide to try to have an experience of a new birth without a definite experience of conviction. There have been very few human beings born in the face of this earth whose birth were not preceded by travail. See? The same is true in the new birth.

And the Holy Spirit of God takes the word of God and convinces you that you are a sinner, convinced that you are a sinner, and convinces you that the wages of your sin is death. If you die in your sin, you will be in hell forever. It is the Holy Spirit applying the living word of God to your heart, your intellect, and your conscience.

See? And if you will in all honesty and sincerity before the Lord receive the witness of the spirit of God through the word of God, then you'll be regenerated and the Holy Spirit of God will come into your body to live. You'll be a new creature in Christ Jesus. See? The Holy Spirit is one parent.

The word of God is the other, except the man be born again by the word, that is, the Bible, being applied to the heart and conscience and the intellect by the Holy Spirit, that man cannot see the kingdom of God. Now, what did our verse say in the very beginning in John's Gospel, chapter 1? Listen. To as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name.

See? Which were born of God, born of God, born of God. Through believing the testimony of the word and receiving the Son of God of whom the word testifies, the man is born again and the parents are the Holy Spirit who makes you realize you need to be saved. The word of God who shows you how to be saved.

The Holy Spirit who comes into your body to live and through these two, you are regenerated. Oh, sinner, do you know what I mean now? Oh, right in your very seat where you're sitting, that you just simply lift your heart to the Lord and say, Oh, Son of God, if that's the way it is, well, I'm not going to struggle any more and try to figure it out. See? That's the miraculous aspect of God's eternal life.

You must give up. See? But you're trying to figure it out and trying to save yourself and all of that and just simply surrender and say, Lord, Lord, I commit myself unreservedly to thee. I receive thy Son as my Savior.

The moment you do it, the Spirit of God will come and you're born to live and you'll be eternally saved. Now, in the next few minutes in closing, I want to give you three brief reasons, three good reasons, why you need to be born again. Basically, first of all, because you need to be born again because the Son of God said if you're not, you cannot even see the Kingdom of God, much less get into it.

But these are three reasons I want you to take home with you. Number one is this. You need to be born again to be finished with your past.

Remember that. How often I meet men and women in our work and hospital visitation and trying to win souls for the Lord and traveling around the country and they have told me I would give anything in the world if I could only get rid of my past. There is an unholy trinity in the world that unites and gangs up on sinners to rob them of peace and here is what it is and you listen and see if you'll agree with me.

There is an there is an unholy trinity that keeps sinners today from having peace as this, remorse over their past, unrest of their present and the uncertainty of their future. Think of it. Remorse over the past, unrest of the present.

There was a time when I could go out in the low grounds and pick up scaly bark and the only thing I had to worry about was a squirrel dropping a nut on my head but now it might be an H-bomb the next time I go out to hit the nut. This world is in awful shape, see? And the fact that I have failed and you know it as well as I do, you consider what you have accomplished and what you could have accomplished had you dedicated yourself to your particular aim of life and you'll be filled with remorse if you're an intelligent human being. That's human nature.

That's a part of the ministry of the Spirit of God to make you dissatisfied with your present life. Remorse over the past, the unrest of the present, the uncertainty of the future. Confess tonight, sinner, that you haven't at least thought of what's coming tomorrow and you're scared to death.

Aren't you? But you know something? This remorse over the past, and I will forget an experience. I visited a boy in the sanatorium at Durham years ago. I used to go and see him once a week for two years, lying flat on his back with tuberculosis.

And I'd say to him, George, you know you lost. Yes, I do. Well, George, why don't you get saved? You know what that poor man told me, lying flat on his back for two solid years? He said, I haven't got time, I reckon.

And he kept putting off the salvation of his soul, and so he improved a little, and he could have a little furlough away from the sanatorium. So I picked up my morning newspaper one Saturday. I saw that George, on the weekend furlough, had killed his girlfriend with a bed slap and cut her throat with a pocket knife.

After listening to the gospel of Jesus Christ for two solid years, and I want to tell you this, if you think you could not be involved in just such a tragic situation, proves to me that you know a lot about everybody else but yourself. And I went to see George at the hospital. A cousin of mine was on the door, and he was sitting on the side of his bed in the isolation ward.

And when I came in the door, he looked up at me, and he put his face down on his hands, and he said, Oh, were it not I would give anything in the world if I got blood out, or if I could just blot that out of my mind. And I'll tell you one thing, tonight I praise God for more than anything in the world. You know what it is, sinner? When I bowed the knees to the Lord of glory eighteen years ago and believed in Him and shed blood for the remission of my sins and was born again in the Spirit of God, I have the authority of God's Word that I have no past against me in heaven prior to that day.

And I'll tell you, it's wonderful not to have a past. Think of it, sinner, if tonight God were willing to forget every one of your sins and blot out your entire past record, wouldn't that be nice? He'll do it. He'll do it tonight.

And if you're born again, remorse over the past. Thank God the Christian has no past. The story that thrilled me as a young believer in the Lord Jesus, someone told me one time in the assembly of Durham, the story of Robert the Bruce of Scotland.

Now you Scotch brethren probably know this story better than I, but I'm telling it tonight, so you'll bear with me. Robert the Bruce was one of those who led the Scotch people, I think, in insurrection or rebellion against England. And he was the The story is told that he received the news that the king's soldiers were coming after him and he knew as he got called to assure death.

And so when he heard about it, he immediately began to flee for his life. He ran and he ran and he ran and the story goes he sat down to rest. And after he'd been resting a while, he heard faintly off in the distance the baying of hounds.

And he got up and he began to run for his life. He knew that the dogs were on his track. Up one hill, down another, madless scrambling and crawling and clawing his way up through the countryside.

The story goes that at the point of exhaustion, when all of a sudden he realized much to his horrible fear and alarm that those dogs sounded so very familiar and he stopped for a moment and he listened and they were his own deer hounds. The best dogs in all the highlands of Scotland and he knew that it was absolutely impossible for him to escape them. They were his and they were on his track.

And on the verge of giving up, the story goes that he finally went through the underbrush and the leaves and the sticks and the trees and he came across one of those crystal clear streams of water coming out of one of the highest hills of all of Scotland. And he fell in on his face and began pounding his way down the stream for a hundred or two hundred yards and he clawed his way along the opposite bank and he lay there with his heart beating against the ground. Listening, listening.

The roar and the din and the barking of the dogs grew thicker and faster and more furious. Until they came to the place where Robert the Bruce plunged into the water and there were a few frustrated yelps and barks and they lost his sense and he was saved. If you will pardon the personal reference, I never will forget one day eighteen years ago as a poor hell-deserving sinner whatever blaspheming infidelity that I had ever committed upon my track, every time I had ever stolen a nickel, every misdeed, every sin I had ever committed, were weighing on my heels like a pack of blood hanging over my head.

down saying, the wages of sin is death, the wages of sin is death, the wages of sin is death, when almost despairing of ever being delivered from the heart of a curse, I came across, blessed be God, a crystal clear stream that day, not the water of the hands of Scotland but the vermilion fluid that flowed from Calvary's cross, the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, printed from all sin, and in desperation I plunged into that stream that day and I'll tell you this, now you listen carefully, from that day to this I haven't even heard a single whine, much less a yelp out of one of those hounds. Praise God for the blood of Jesus Christ. You see what I mean, sinner? But that's just what you need, that's the kind of desperation you need.

You need just that awareness of a need in life. All right? You need to be born again, first of all, to be finished with your past, secondly, to be filled for the present. Oh, how hard it is to enjoy life.

I had the joy of speaking at Ellison Stone yesterday, at wife's song today at dinner, and I gave them both the same message, but as I don't have a message in the whole Bible that's any more needed than the one that the Savior gave in John 15, 14, in the day in which we're living, let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. And I testify to you today that in the midst of all of Castro's foolish, stupid ranting and raving and Castro's subterfuge, my heart knows not the slightest tremor. Not the slightest tremor.

Feel for the present. Praise God. Feel for the present.

Thirdly, you need to be fitted for the future. You read in 2 Peter chapter 3, there's coming a day when the heavens and the earth are going to melt with a fervent heat, the heaven is going to be dissolved and the earth is going to pass away, but we look for a new heaven and a new earth, and when you've got a new creation, you've got to have new creatures to live in it. That's when you've got to be born again to be fitted for the present.

Would you like to be saved tonight? Dick, would you come and lead us in a song? If you're here tonight without the Lord Jesus Christ. Look, let me show you once more before we close how simple it is. Now listen very carefully.

If you're here tonight, now I don't expect anybody as fast as I talk to keep up with everything I say, but listen. If you're here tonight and you know three things and you can give me affirmative answers to these three questions, you can be saved tonight and have every one of your sins forgiven. Are you ready? If you know that you're lost, got it? If you are positively sure that you want to be saved, that you're sick and tired of your sin and you want to be filled for the present, finished with your past, and if you can say tonight, not only am I lost, not only do I want to be saved, but I want to be saved tonight, not tomorrow.

Look, if you mean that from the depth of your heart and as we sing this closing song, the best you know how is just lift your heart to God and say, God, I believe. Listen carefully now. God, I believe with all of my heart that Jesus Christ died for me.

And I will this moment by faith put all of my trust and confidence that his death alone is payment for all of my sins. And I'll receive him right now by faith into my heart to my Lord and my Savior. You'll be born again, you might well you think.

You will. Don't go away without the Lord Jesus, the mighty Lord Jesus, and he wants you to be saved. Shall we sing number 241 as we close?

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