

A Clear Gospel Message

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the necessity of being born again through repentance and faith for true salvation in a world of diluted gospel messages.

Duration: 1:01:33

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:6-7, John 3:16-18, Acts 20:20

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of laying a foundation and being born again. He references Acts chapter 20, where the apostle Paul declares that he preached the same message of repentance and belief in God to both Jews and Greeks. The speaker emphasizes that in order to be born again, one must come out of darkness and not hide anything from God. He also addresses the question of whether all religions lead to one God, stating that our opinions about God are worth nothing as none of us have seen Him, and therefore, we should rely on the truth revealed in the Bible.

Transcript

So in this message I want to explain to you what it means to be born again. What do Christians mean or what does the Bible mean when it says we can be saved? Generally speaking in the church meetings we preach about holiness and growth mainly because most of the people who are here, I hope, are saved and born again. But there is always a need to explain the gospel of salvation because we are a growing church.

Every year new people are coming in. And I'll tell you something that I've heard from many people in our church in the last 32 years nearly. Many of them have told me we thought we were saved before we came here.

When we came here we discovered we were not saved. And we got saved after coming here because we never knew what repentance was till we came here because we never knew what sin was. You cannot turn from sin until you know what sin is.

It's something like if I tell you stand up and face towards the north. How can you do it unless you know where the south is? If you know where the south is then you can turn towards the north. But if you don't know where south or east or west or anything is then you don't know where north is.

And a lot of people are being told to turn to the north if they don't know where the south is. In the same way a lot of people are being told to turn from sin but not being told what sin is. Or if sin is described in a general way like drinking, smoking, cinema going, gambling.

A lot of people in the world say I don't need to be saved because I don't do those things in any case. So there's a lot of false understanding of repentance because of a false understanding of sin. And I'm sure that there are many people who thought they were saved before they came here.

It's only when they heard the message against sin and repentance that they really got converted. And also there's another reason and that is we live in a world where the standards in Christianity have come down tremendously. Now if you were living 70, 80 years ago or even when I was a young boy 50 years ago, it was much easier to hear a clear gospel in many, many churches.

At least there were churches that just didn't preach the gospel and there were churches that preached the gospel. And in the ones that preached the gospel you could hear a clear message. But it's not like that today.

Today it's become a big hodgepodge of compromise in many churches and what you hear is not necessarily the truth. And also we have so many public meetings where people are told to believe in Jesus. But believing in Jesus doesn't bring salvation.

There is no repentance. There are a lot of television programs today where they are more interested in your money. They also don't help you to become saved.

So it's not only newcomers who come here but we've got children growing up in our church who from the time they begin to understand if all they hear is about holiness and growth, what they are hearing is how to build the building but having laid no foundation. Being born again is like the foundation of a building. If you don't lay the foundation and just try to live a good life, it will be like following any other religion in the world which teaches live a good life.

And many people find a satisfaction in that. Yeah, I want to live a good life. Those are the walls, not the foundation.

The foundation is you must be born again. You must come to a new life. When Jesus used that expression in John's Gospel chapter 3, he used it to a man who was a bishop.

Now think that many of you have seen what a bishop looks like. He doesn't wear the white dress of priests because he's a little higher. He wears purple and he'll have a cross around his neck and a dog collar around his neck.

Well, he's sitting there and you tell him, you must be born again. That's what Jesus said to the bishop Nicodemus who was probably 60 or 70 years old. He said, you must be born again.

Was Nicodemus an adulterer? John chapter 3 said, verse 3, unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God. See, Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, it says in verse 1. A Pharisee who lived a very upright life. He wasn't fooling around with women.

He wasn't cheating and things like that. But he was not born again. It's not enough to be good.

And also Nicodemus had the true religion. He was not in some false religion. He had the true Bible, the Old Testament with him.

He followed the only true religion there was on earth in those days. Religion which Moses taught. Jesus said, you have to be born again.

Otherwise you can't see the kingdom of God. You can be an Israeli, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews without being born again. That's okay.

You can get up and preach in the pulpit without being born again. But to enter God's kingdom, you must be born again. You have to have a spiritual birth.

And he said, how can I, verse 4, how can that be? Can I enter a second time into my mother's womb and be born? You see, his mind was only thinking of earth. How can I go into my mother's womb and be born a second time? And Jesus said, no. Verse 6, that which is born of the flesh is flesh.

If you get into your mother's womb a hundred times and come out, it'll still be flesh. That doesn't help. Any number of that type of births doesn't help.

I'm talking about a spiritual birth. That which is born of the Holy Spirit is something spiritual. So born again is to be born of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said in verse 6. And he said in verse 7, you must be born again.

It's interesting that Jesus didn't explain so many steps over there. He just told him, simple thing, that Jesus, he himself, would be lifted up on the cross to die, verse 14. And he also said that it was God in love who sent him to the world, verse 16, to die so that those who believe in him would have eternal life.

And in verse 17 he said he had come to save the world. And such a person will not be judged in the final day. But the judgment is this, verse 19, that when he came into the world, men loved darkness rather than light.

Those who love darkness, that means they want to hide something. Who's the man who likes to walk in the darkness or do things in the darkness? Always those who want to hide something. If you've got nothing to hide, you'll come out in the light.

And so the one who practices the truth comes to the light, verse 21. So the whole thing holds together. If you want to be born again, you've got to come out of the darkness first.

That means don't try to hide anything in your life. I don't mean hide it from me. You can hide it from me because I don't want to know your past life.

But don't hide it from God. Come to God and be open with him about everything. You can't remember everything wrong you did in your life.

None of us can. But whatever you remember, tell him. And acknowledge that you're a sinner.

That means coming into the light means being honest and not hiding anything. That's one of the first steps. And when you first come to Christ, naturally you will not know everything about sin.

Because sin is a very big area and you may be just seeing a small part of it. It's like you can live in India and see only a small part of India. India is a very big country.

Sin is like that. You may see a little bit of it. But if you're willing to turn from what you see, that indicates that you want to turn from all sin.

Because you cannot give up what you don't know. So coming into the light, we come there first and then the Bible speaks about walking in the light. That is like living in a small part of India and then walking through the whole land of India and seeing the whole country.

Little by little by little. So sin is something like that where you come and see a little bit in the beginning and you cleanse that. And then little by little by little you go.

I'll use another illustration. You're going into a house which has got many dirty rooms. Say a thousand dirty rooms.

And you're going to live in it. Or you want Jesus to live in it. But he says, I've got to cleanse you before.

You've got to cleanse the room before I live. You won't let Jesus come and live in a dirty room. So you start with one room.

And you cleanse it. Cleanse it thoroughly. And that's not enough.

Because the whole house is dirty. Little by little the house gets cleaner and cleaner and cleaner and cleaner and cleaner. That is how we progress from being born again to growing up into Christ.

So we're not talking about that growing up part. We talk about that often in the church. But we want to talk about how to lay a foundation and how to be born again.

I want to read a verse in Acts chapter 20. The apostle Paul was a man whom God chose to preach the gospel widely in the first century. And he says, Acts chapter 20, he was speaking to the elders.

And he told them that wherever he went. Let's read verse 20. Acts 20 verse 20.

I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable for you. I taught you publicly and from house to house. And what did I preach everywhere? I spoke to Jews and to Greeks.

See, the Jews in those days, probably even today, divided the world into two parts. Jews, non-Jews. It's like in our country.

We have Brahmins dividing the country into two parts. Brahmins and non-Brahmins. So, the expression he uses here is speaking to people who are of Jewish background.

He said, you divided the world into Jews and non-Jews. Well, the whole world, to everybody, Jews and Greeks. I preached the same message.

That is, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. So, those are the two things that everybody needs to hear if they want to lay a foundation. If they want to be born again.

These are two things that God has joined together. Repent and believe. Now, man has always tried to separate what God has joined together.

You see all the divorces and marriages nowadays. But God has joined together, man is separating. And here also in the message of the Gospel, God has joined repentance and faith together.

But preachers have separated it. And generally speaking, it's only faith left now. Now, if you have only faith, you can't be born again.

It's like saying a woman alone, all by herself, can't have a child. No matter how hard she tries. A man alone can't have a child.

Repentance alone can't bring salvation. It's a man and woman together that bring a child to birth. And it's when repentance and faith come together, a new birth takes place in our spirit.

And this is as real as physical birth. Just as real. And it happens in a moment.

It's not gradual. There may be a preparation for it. Over 20 years or 2 days or 2 minutes or half an hour.

There may be a preparation for it like a baby in a mother's womb, being there for 9 months. But the birth is like that, in a moment. I mean, babies don't get born over a period of days.

They come out of the womb in a day, in a moment. They are out. And the new birth is also like that.

But it is possible, particularly for those who lived fairly decent good lives, that they may not know the exact moment when they were born again. I don't know, for example, exactly when that transition took place. That's something like, if I'm traveling by train, or even more difficult, by plane, from Kerala to Cochin to Bangalore, I may not know the exact moment when I crossed the border.

It's not important. The important thing is I came to Bangalore, I crossed the border. You can't come to Bangalore from Cochin without crossing the Karnataka-Kerala border.

But you may not know the exact moment. But you can't come here without crossing the border. The same way, you may not know the exact moment when that took place, but it's something that happens in a moment.

Or, like a person who doesn't know his birthday. A person may not know his birthday, but he may be alive. He may be more alive than the fellow who knows his birthday and who is sick and about to die.

So, knowing a date is not the important thing. The important thing is that you crossed the border. That you are born again.

And that you are sure of it. So, many people are not sure because they don't believe what God's word says. Or, maybe they haven't really repented.

So, I want to try and make this very clear so that before you leave this meeting, at least you'll understand what it means to be born again and saved, even if you are not actually, and you hope you will be. The foundation, the Christian faith, many people say, don't all religions lead to one God? The answer is no. People tell me, why are you so narrow-minded? Why are you so, Christians, so narrow-minded to say that Jesus is the only way? Why can't you accept other religions also as all good people trying to go to God? Well, I say, let's be honest, I say to such a person, you don't know anything about God, I don't know anything about God.

We are human beings born into the world. None of us have seen God at any time. So, our opinion is worth nothing.

I mean, it's like if you've never seen an elephant, never seen a picture of an elephant, never seen an elephant, how will you know what an elephant looks like? Supposing you try to draw a picture of an animal you've never seen, or even a picture, you can't draw a picture of that, it'll be wrong. You may think you know, I may think I know, but both of us will be wrong. So I say, it's no use, your opinion and my opinion are both worthless.

But Jesus Christ came from heaven. His opinion is worth more. And you are telling me to say that Jesus is the same as all other religions and gods? Hang on.

You are asking me to call Jesus Christ a liar and a deceiver. You want me to do that? You're telling me to call Jesus Christ a liar and a deceiver? I say, no, no, no, no, no, I'm not asking you to. I'm asking you to respect him and respect other gods.

I say, hang on. Jesus said in John 14, verse 6, I am the way, no one comes to the Father but through me. Is that right or wrong? If it's right, then he's the only way.

If it's wrong, either he was a liar, or he was a deceiver, or deceived. So what do you want me to call him? You want me to call him a liar? You want me to say Jesus Christ is a liar, Jesus Christ is a deceiver, or Jesus Christ was deceived. Which of the three do you want me to say? No, I don't want you to say anything.

And the only other alternative is he spoke the truth. Which is, I am the way, the truth, and life. No one, no one, no one, no one, no one comes to the Father but through me.

I can't go to God except through Jesus Christ. And I'll explain to you why. Truth is always very narrow-minded.

Many people say, why can't you be broad-minded? And nowadays in the world, everybody likes to be broad-minded. Don't get into controversy with anybody. Accept everything.

I say 2 plus 2 is 4. Somebody says, no, it's 3. Somebody says, no, 2 plus 2 is 5. Let's accept everybody. Or let's at least accept those who are pretty close to us. Like somebody who says, 2 plus 2 is 3.9. Somebody says, 4.1. They are much closer.

You say, I'm sorry. I'll get all my calculations wrong if I say 2 plus 2 is 3.9. Or even 4.1, or even 4.0001. Truth is absolute. 2 plus 2 is 4. I say, you also follow that, I would say to such a person.

Your mathematics is pretty ruthlessly narrow-minded. You don't give any option to another fellow to have a different view. So don't call me narrow-minded.

You're narrow-minded too. What if I say the earth goes around the sun? No, no, no. Let's accept the other fellow who says the sun goes around the earth also.

I mean, let's be broad-minded about these things. I say, you can't be broad-minded. Everything, all your physics calculations will go wrong if you accept this fellow says the sun goes around the earth.

That fellow says the earth goes around the sun. And somebody else says something else. Truth is absolute, whether in the realm of astronomy or mathematics, chemistry.

H₂ plus O is water. It's not salt. No, let's accept the fellow who says it's salt.

I'm sorry, I can't accept it. Two parts of hydrogen plus one part of oxygen is water. It's not salt.

You see how truth is absolute in every area? Only when it comes to faith, they say, no, no, no. Let's be broad-minded. Broad-minded people are in error.

In mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy and religion. But people are willing to be very narrow-minded in all those other areas and don't recognize that truth is narrow-minded here too. Jesus Christ said, I am the way.

No one comes to the Father but by me. So I say, you're not arguing with me when I say that. You're arguing with Jesus.

So Jesus was either a liar or he was a madman or he was a deceiver or he was deceived or he is God. You can have your choice. But don't say he was a good man.

How can he be a good man if he told such a lie like this? No. Don't say he's a prophet. I don't accept.

I'm not excited when somebody says, Jesus was a very good man. Are you excited when somebody says that? It's like somebody saying, your father is a very nice dog. What do you mean my father is a very nice dog? He's not a bad dog.

He's a nice dog. That's exactly the same. When you say Jesus was a nice man, he was a good prophet.

No. He was almighty God. My father is no dog.

And Jesus Christ is no ordinary man or prophet. So I mention that because sometimes Christians are excited when somebody says, Jesus was a good man. No.

He was God. He came in human form. You need to understand why it was necessary.

Some of these things are very simple, but if you understand, it will help you. The Christian faith teaches that all human beings are sinners. If you come to God, if you come to Jesus as a Christian, you cannot be forgiven.

Because Jesus did not die for Christians, he died for sinners. So the only person who can be forgiven is one who comes to Jesus and says, I'm a sinner. Anybody sitting here, you come to Jesus saying, I'm a Christian, Jesus will say, I didn't die for Christians.

You can't come to Jesus as a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Atheist, nothing. He said, I came to the world to die for sinners. You come as a sinner, you can be forgiven.

You come as a Christian, you will live and die in your sins and go to hell. Because that's the punishment. That's the first thing I want to say.

And it's very easy for us to know that we are sinners. Your conscience, God's given you a conscience. Everybody's got a conscience.

Particularly children, they have a very sensitive conscience. As you grow up, you can kill that conscience, kill that conscience with all types of doing wrong things. And when your conscience tells you something, you say, shut up, I'm not going to listen to you, I'm not going to listen to you.

Ultimately, our conscience is dead, it may stop speaking to you. But that doesn't mean you become holy. No.

You see, our little children, if you want to go to a home and find out the truth about something, who should you ask? Ask the three-year-old. He cannot tell a lie. You ask the grown-up people with a straight face, they'll tell you a lie.

But the three-year-old, he'll tell you the truth. But that three-year-old, you wait another 15 years, it has become a perfect liar. Just like you and me.

Because we kill our conscience. We are all born with a very sensitive conscience. Have you seen the feet of a little baby? So soft and tender.

But look at your feet now. That's what happens to our conscience also. Hard.

The feet of a baby, one small pin, it'll feel it. Our feet, some people so hard, even a drawing pin won't hurt them. That's what happens to our conscience.

But our conscience is what God's way of saying, you're doing something wrong. You can kill it. And that's why I tell you, the most useful gift God's given you, like your conscience, Jesus called it the eye.

The eye of the heart is the conscience. Keep it carefully. Otherwise you won't be able to see.

You live in darkness, like a blind man. The more you kill your conscience, it's like poking your eyes. Keep on poking it, poking it, poking it.

One day you can't see anything. But your conscience tells you, you're a sinner. And it doesn't matter when you look at a baby, when you go to see all the babies in a hospital, can you tell me which one is Hindu, which one is Muslim, which one is Christian? No.

They're all the same. They're all sinners. You go and see those same babies grown up and playing in a kindergarten playground.

Who's the Christian, who's the Hindu? They all fight with each other. All goes to show that they're all the same. When they are born, they're all the same when they grow up.

But the parents will take one to a church, one to a mosque, one to a temple, and they become their own religions. That's all. Your religion you have is most probably because your parents took you to some place like that.

Jesus didn't come for religious people. He came for sinners. Your conscience tells you, you're a sinner.

You come to Jesus and say, Lord, I am a sinner. I've done so many wrong things. Now the next question is, can't God overlook our sins? I mean, won't a good God overlook our sins? Isn't he a father? Like you know, if my son went and bashed up my scooter and blew the whole thing up and he says, Dad, I'm sorry.

God, I forgive him. Oh yeah, of course I can forgive him. For something like that, I can forgive him.

Or if I gave him a thousand rupees and he went and lost it somewhere and said, Dad, forgive me. I can forgive him. Those things are, those are not moral issues.

If our sin was just like that, like breaking up a scooter or even burning a house, oh, we can forgive him. But sin is not like that. Sin is a crime.

Supposing I'm a judge. My son is standing there. He's committed a crime.

Can I say, I love you, my son. I won't punish you. Even an earthly judge will not do that.

Because he's got a sense of justice. Not because he's going to be caught. Some people just won't do it because they've got a sense of justice.

And that sense of justice he's got in his mind is a fraction of the perfect justice of God Almighty. So when I've done something wrong, God is the judge and he looks at me. He says, son, I love you very much, but I can't let you go.

Because you did something wrong. But you say, Judge, you're his father. Can't you just let him go? He's sorry.

However much my son is sorry to me in the court if he's done something wrong, I have to punish him. Let's say he robbed a bank or did something like that and I have to fine him. Your fine is 10 lakhs.

Pay the fine or go to jail. People say, boy, what a strict... He doesn't love his son. His son also may turn around to me and say... His son may turn to me and say, Dad, you don't love me? Punishing me like this? Can't you let me go? You're the judge.

You've got all power. No, son. I'm your judge here.

Fine, I sign the court order. 10 lakhs or go to jail. And while he's looking sad at such a hard judge, I get up from my seat and take off my judge's robes, come down, become an ordinary man again, take out my checkbook and write 10 lakhs to my son.

Here. Go and pay the fine. You're free.

Can anybody in the world accuse me of not doing what is just? No. I gave him the full penalty of the law. Can he accuse me that I don't love him? No.

I punished him as a judge. I paid the punishment. Maybe I emptied my bank account.

Entire 10 lakhs. Gone. To save his life.

I'm going to jail. He will know I loved him as a father. That is what God did on the cross.

He cannot overlook your sin. He forgives you only because the punishment has been paid. Yes, the punishment has to be paid, but I'll pay it myself. Now, listen to this.

If Jesus Christ was not God, like the Jehovah's Witnesses say, like some other cult groups say, and God punished him for our sin, that would be the greatest injustice of all. God cannot be God. Isn't that right? Supposing I punish you when in the court and somebody else says, okay, I'll take the punishment for him.

You are to be hanged to death for the murder you committed. And your mother comes and says, no, don't hang him. He's a young man.

Please hang me. And the judge says, okay, you can be hanged instead of your son. How long do you think that judge will remain in his seat? Can a mother be hanged in place of her son even if she wants to? That'll be injustice.

So, even if Jesus is a high created being, if you punish him for my sin, it can't be right. And secondly, one mother cannot die for a million murderers. Supposing a million murderers are here all condemned to be hanged and one mother says, come and hang me.

How can you take the punishment of all these million people? If Jesus was a created being, he could not take the punishment for millions and billions and billions of human beings. Impossible. So all this teaching that Christ was created and they take some misunderstand, misquote some verses which they don't understand properly.

They don't think about it. What are you saying? That means you're still in your sin then. I would say to every Jehovah's Witness.

Ah, you may sound so nice, but you're still in your sin. No created being can die for your sin. Sorry.

But God Himself, He can die for our sin because He's the judge. He's the ruler of the universe. He can punish us and take the punishment Himself.

That's why God had to come down in the person of Christ. And another thing, if God was only one person and not three persons. That's another thing some Christians teach.

God is only one person. But how in the world then can God come down here and become a man and still be God up there in heaven to whom Jesus prayed? Do you know there's some Christians who believe that? They baptize in the name of Jesus only. You know why? Because they say there's no three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, even though Jesus said you must baptize in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Because they deny the Trinity. 1 John chapter 2 says, if you deny the Trinity, then swear to the Antichrist. Why is that? Because then you're denying that God came in the form of a man and took the punishment in the presence of God the Father who was in heaven.

How can that be? There's only one person. So these are just a few things I want to say of wrong understandings a lot of Christians have about Christ being deity himself. When he was on earth, he was God.

People worshipped him and he accepted it, which even angels don't accept, believing he was God, but he did not use his power as God when he was on earth, otherwise people wouldn't even have been able to look at him. Once he lifted the veil on the Mount of Transfiguration for just a few minutes and Peter and James and John fell down like they were struck by lightning. If Jesus had lived on earth as God, everybody would have fallen down flat like that.

It happened also once to some of the Roman soldiers who came to capture him. Suddenly got a flash of who he was and they fell down. But he did not use that power.

Just briefly sometimes he lifted the veil only once or twice in his entire earthly life, but otherwise he lived on earth as a man, not using any of his powers as God because he wanted to be an example for us. So

Jesus was fully God and fully man when he came to earth and when he died on the cross he was taking the punishment for our sin. And the punishment for our sin is eternity in hell.

And when Jesus hung on the cross for three hours, what he faced was hell. That means being forsaken by God. That is the most terrible thing any human being can ever face.

Think of the worst suffering you can ever face multiplied by a million and more and you understand what being forsaken by God is. We think of hell as some geographical place somewhere. Maybe it is.

But the worst part of hell is that it's a God forsaken place. It's the only God forsaken place in the universe. That means God is not there.

And it's terrible to be there because God is not there. God is in this world today that's why even for unbelievers things are very pleasant. But when you go to the place where God himself has withdrawn his presence all the evil and the devil and the man and all comes out fully it will be terrible.

That evil is what makes the fire of hell, makes people's life so miserable. But Jesus faced it when he hung on the cross being forsaken by God for three hours the earth shook, the sun was darkened and all types of things happened in those three hours. In the last three hours, he was six hours on the cross, the last three hours he was forsaken by God because that is the only way he could take our punishment.

Not just by physically dying but a spiritual death took place there. His connection with God was cut off. The Bible says the father is the head of Christ and the head was wrenched off for three hours on the cross.

Can you imagine if your head is wrenched off, what it's like? 1 Corinthians 11.3 says the father is the head of Christ and the head was wrenched off on the cross and he suffered hell not just for you and me but for the whole world. How could one man take the punishment of the whole world for eternity because that one man was God. He was infinite.

So the punishment that billions of people will suffer for eternity could be concentrated into three hours in one man and he was God. We don't know what agony that was. That is the price he paid for your sin.

Mine. That's the first foundation of Christianity. Christ died for our sins.

That's not enough. He rose from the dead. If he did not rise from the dead I would not be a Christian.

I wouldn't waste my time preaching this message. His rising from the dead is the proof that all that he said on earth was true. No man died for the sins of the world.

No man rose from the dead. No religion even claims that somebody died for the sins of the world except Christianity and no religion even claims that somebody who died came out of the grave after three days. So the foundation of the Christian faith is not do good, be kind, don't hurt others.

It is Christ died for your sins and he rose up from the dead. You remove those two things, Christianity becomes like any other religion in the world. And that's why it's unique.

You need to understand that. You are a sinner and you deserve to go to hell for all eternity, to be forsaken by God forever and you have lived for yourself, you have created created to belong to God but you live for yourself and when you come back to God you must come back like a thief who has stolen what belongs to God for so many years. How old are you? 25? 30? So many years you have stolen something that

belongs to God.

You can come back to him in sorrow. Lord I didn't know this was your thing I stole so many years. I want to come back to you and give my life to you.

Thank you Lord Jesus for dying for me. I believe you rose from the dead. If you didn't rise from the dead you wouldn't be living.

You can't pray to good people who are dead. The Apostle Paul was a good man but I can't pray to him because his body is in the grave and I can't communicate with him. But Jesus rose from the dead, I can talk to him.

And more so because after he rose from the dead, he went to heaven after 40 days and he sent his Holy Spirit you know just like God sent his son to walk on this earth for 33 and a half years and the son of God went up to heaven the third person of the Trinity came down to earth, the Holy Spirit just as real a person as Jesus. Holy Spirit is not a force no not some power he gives power but he himself is not a power. It's a person, just as real a person.

You don't look at a person and say he's a force. He's a person who gives power like a king who's got tremendous power. The Holy Spirit is a person just like Jesus, he came to the earth but because he didn't come in a human body like Jesus he says to you I want a human body, yours.

It's wonderful that the Holy Spirit can come and take this body and if I respond to him do in this body exactly what he did in Jesus' body when he was on earth. It's a wonderful thing to be a Christian. See that's the thing that challenged me, that's why the Bible says that the Holy Spirit comes in you you can walk like Jesus walked.

You couldn't do that before the Holy Spirit came, before that you could only improve your life on the outside. So a lot of Christians are trying to live like that, improve their life on the outside and be a good person like the Old Testament people. That's not the way.

However much you improve, you'll never be like Jesus. The Holy Spirit, the God himself is to come inside you and as you respond to him you'll be you won't be God but you'll have God living inside you, helping you to behave like him. That is why I'm so disturbed when I see so many people who talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit and telling lies, getting angry loving money, especially loving money fighting, taking people to court so many things.

I say this is not the Holy Spirit. This is an evil spirit. The Holy Spirit will make you like Jesus and maybe the Holy Spirit came in you but he probably left you long ago because you didn't respond to his promptings.

You know the Holy Spirit doesn't stay anywhere where people don't want him. I believe that. You can invite him in and if you don't respond to what he's saying he'll say goodbye.

Live your own life. You'll still live a good life like Abraham and Moses and a lot of other people in the Old Testament who didn't have the Holy Spirit. You'll live a good life but you won't be a child of God.

So this is the wonderful message of the Gospel that you can turn and receive Christ through his Spirit into your heart that your body can now be the house of God. I was speaking to somebody once who was smoking cigarettes I said, will you smoke a cigarette inside a church building? He said, I don't know. I've

never smoked inside a church building.

Why? Oh, it's the house of God. I said, do you know your body is supposed to be the house of God not this building? How can you do something wrong in God's house? If you want to commit adultery will you commit adultery inside a church? Not in the house of God. If you want to watch internet pornography, will you watch it inside a church building? No, no, no, that's a holy place.

We don't have an understanding. What is the holy place? It's his body. This is the temple of God.

Anything that people won't do inside a church building, you can't do it here. Why do I say we must be careful about how we treat this body? Habits of drinking and smoking and things that destroy this body, taking drugs and many other things. It's like, would you go to a church building and break the walls and windows? You wouldn't do it? This is the church building.

This is God's house. Don't destroy it by bad eating habits, bad habits in your life that destroy the temple. God wants to give you power through the Holy Spirit to be a true Christian.

That doesn't mean we reach perfection in a day. The Christian life, the Bible says, is like a race. Being born again is coming to the starting line.

That's all. It's a marathon race of 70 years where you run, run, run, run. As you run, you get closer and closer and closer to the finishing line.

But don't stay at the starting line. When you are born again, when you accept Christ, you are born again, you come to the starting line. All it means is you've turned your back and come to the starting line.

Now I want to run. Or to use another illustration, I've laid a foundation, now I want to build a house. So, it's the most wonderful life you can ever live.

Because if you respond to the teachings of the Bible, you'll just go more and more higher up the mountain, become more and more like Christ in your life. And all the bad things in your life will be eliminated. So what must you do practically to become a Christian, a true Christian, to be born again? First of all, you need to acknowledge you're a sinner.

How much you are aware of your sin, maybe very little, maybe you think only two or three rooms in your house are dirty, never mind. Actually all your house is dirty, all the thousand rooms are dirty, but maybe you don't see it. But you see that there's dirt, sin in your life, you're wrong, even a little child, little children know that they've done wrong things.

That's the first thing. Acknowledge it, come to the light and say, Lord, I am a sinner. I'm not a Christian, I'm a sinner.

I'm not coming to you as a Christian, I come to you as a sinner. Then, you recognize that that sin has to be punished, you have to go to hell, that's the punishment. Even for one sin, that's what you need to recognize, Lord, I deserve hell for my sin.

I may not be as bad as the murderer and the thief and the adulterer, but I've also sinned. I've violated your law. The Bible says if you violate one law, it's as bad as... If you've got a good chicken curry, how many lizards do you have to put inside to spoil it? Ten? Twenty? Or one? Supposing you put only one, another fellow put a five hundred.

You say, my curry is better than yours. Yours is unfit for eating too. How many drops of poison do you need in a glass of milk to corrupt it? One drop or twenty drops? One? Enough to kill? One sin makes you as much a sinner as someone who's committed five hundred or five million.

Because sin is poison. It's polluted your whole system. So, don't compare yourself with others.

Finish with that today. Lord, I'm a sinner, I deserve hell. See, if you don't take this position, if right at the beginning you think you're a little better sinner than the other fellow, I've got only two lizards in my curry, he's got ten.

Or I put only three drops of poison in my glass, he put five hundred. These are the type of Christians who never make progress. Twenty years later, they'll still be like that.

Pathetic. If you want to make a good start in your life, recognize that you are no different from the worst sinner in the world. I am just as guilty as anybody else, even though I haven't put so many drops of poison as he did.

But I deserve hell. I tell you, it's what I did to change my life radically. I know many people in CFC and other places who have never come to that place in their whole life.

You see them twenty years later, they still think they're better than somebody else. They don't grow spiritually. You want to be like that? Or you want to be a radical, wholehearted Christian? Be a good Christian right from the beginning.

Don't be a drifter. So that's important. Lord, I deserve hell.

But, I know with all my heart that you died for me. It was my sin that crucified you on the cross. You died because of my sin.

I want to hate sin in my life because you died there. And I believe with all my heart that you're the son of God. You rose from the dead.

I want you to come into my life. Rule my life as my Lord. I want you to give me your spirit to dwell in me.

I want to be born again. And then you can be born of the Holy Spirit. Because God's word says in John 1 verse 12 it says, as many as received Him John 1 verse 12 as many as received Him to them He gave the right to become children of God even to those who believe in His name.

So if I receive Him, He gives me the right to be a child of God. So faith means a committing of myself to Him, not just believing. You can believe in somebody, but you may not commit yourself to Him.

It's like asking a woman at the marriage at the wedding ceremony are you willing to give yourself to this man? That is faith. Supposing she says, yeah I believe he's a good man. I think he's a very good man actually.

You want to marry him? No, that I have to think about. You can't be married. What is that woman choosing in marriage? She's saying, I'm going to change my name from today.

I'm going to be Mrs. So and So. I'm going to I'm not going to live with my parents anymore. I'm going to live with this man.

I don't know where he's going to take me. But I'm going to go with him. That is true Christianity.

You know what the word Christian if I could say it reverently it's like saying Mrs. Christ I got married. When did my wife take my name? When she got married to me. You can't take Christ's name till you're married to Him.

Of course so many people can go around saying they are Mrs. who didn't know my name but they are not. So many people can go around saying they are Christians. They are not.

Are you married? Then you can take His name. Have you surrendered to Him? Have you said, I'm yours now. Not just for one or two days.

People don't get married for one or two days. They don't drift in and out of that fellow's house. So many people are like that and they think they are Christians.

They are not Christians. No, Christian I've committed. Believe means that.

That's the meaning of believe. I've committed myself totally to this person. From this day.

I'm not asking you for any half-hearted commitment. Total commitment. If you don't want to get married, go home and think about it.

Come back tomorrow or ten years later whenever you're ready to be totally committed to Christ. That is what we preach in this church. That doesn't mean you're perfect.

You may do something wrong, your husband will forgive you but you're going to live with him. When a wife gets married, she's not saying, I promise I'll never do anything wrong from today. No.

I may do 101 things wrong but I'm going to be with you for the rest of my life. That's what she's saying. I'm not saying you'll never do anything wrong.

I'm saying, do you want to be committed to Christ totally, permanently for the rest of your life? And you can be that today. And then, we can take baptism. Baptism is like a marriage certificate.

You can't get married just by going and getting a marriage certificate, right? And you can't become a Christian just by getting baptized. After you get married, you get the marriage certificate. So, after we give ourselves to Christ, we take baptism, which is like a testimony, I've finished with my old life.

Now I belong to Jesus. He's my Lord. He's my bridegroom.

He's my husband. I'm going to live with him forever. And husbands and wives, if they're good husbands and wives, they'll talk a lot to each other.

And that's what we have to do with Jesus from that day on. Talk to him. Listen to him.

Talk to us from the Bible. And a good wife will never do anything that her husband does not like. Think of a husband and wife really love each other.

And the wife says, I want to watch this movie. And the husband says, no, it's not a good movie. And she says, no, I don't care what you think.

I'm going to watch it. You sit in your room. I'll watch by myself.

You think they're going to have a happy marriage? Tell me. You know the believers who watch movies today that Jesus would never watch, they have sent off Christ out of the house. Lord, you get out of here.

We're watching something we don't want you to see. They don't realize that. And that is why what such people have is religion, not Christ.

God wants to use them mightily for His kingdom, but He cannot use them. Because their Christianity is in spurts. Sunday morning they're married.

They live with their husband and say, Lord, I love you so much. You're the greatest. You're the most wonderful.

Etc, etc, etc. All the songs we sing. But Monday you kick him out of the house.

The Sunday you come back again. This is how many Christians live. I'm not inviting you to a marriage like that.

Let other people live like that. Don't you get into that type of marriage. What your husband does not like, you're not going to do from today.

Do you want a Christianity like that? If not, there are many churches in Bangalore that will give you an easier way. It shall not be the truth. And you will risk your life.

You will risk your eternity by listening to something which is false. The truth may be difficult, but God will help you to do it. He'll never ask you to do something which He won't also put His arms underneath and help you to do it.

But it's the most wonderful life you can ever live. I'll tell you that. I started living this life 47 years ago and I have no regret.

My only regret is I wish I had started earlier. It's the most wonderful life you can ever live. You won't find many people living it.

Many who call themselves Christians, even those who say they are born-again Christians, spirit-filled and all, I don't find that they love their husband. I don't find that they will say to their husband, I'll never do what you don't like. I always try to say to Jesus, Lord, I'll never do what you don't like.

I'll never speak what you don't like. But I tell you, I love my husband. I want to invite you, my friends, to respond to Jesus Christ like that, to give your life totally to Christ today.

Can you be sure that you're born-again? Romans 8, verse 16 says, Romans 8, 16 says, the Holy Spirit will bear witness with your spirit that you're a child of God. So you have a spirit that tells you you're a child of God. The Holy Spirit will tell that spirit, you're a child of God.

I can pray with you or you can pray yourself and say, Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Come into my life. But I will not tell you you're a child of God.

I leave that to the Holy Spirit. It's better He tells you. You read God's word and the Holy Spirit will come and tell you, you're a child of God.

And you know what happens as that time, as time goes on, you come to know your husband better and better and better and better. I know Jesus so well today. I'm never lonely.

I cannot be lonely. Because I can't go to a place where He's not there. No problem I have which I cannot tell Him.

It's a wonderful life. It's the best life. It's the way God wanted man to live.

It's a life full of joy. It's a life free from anxiety and fear because I give my future into His hand and say, Lord, you hold the future. Lead me.

Just make sure. I want to hold your hand. I'll go only where you go.

I'll tell you, most born-again Christians do not live like this. So don't make them your example. Look for the few who live like this.

Make them your example. And your life will be wonderful. And God will make you a blessing to others.

I want to bow our heads now in prayer. While our heads are bowed in prayer, you can pray a simple prayer sitting in your seat. Lord Jesus, I am a sinner.

I acknowledge it, Lord. I may not be as bad as others, but I deserve hell. Thank you for dying for me.

I never knew till today how much you loved me. That you took my punishment, you died, suffered hell on the cross for my sin. Help me to hate sin.

I want you to come into my life and be Lord of my life. Be ruler of my life. I want your spirit to come inside and give me a new birth.

I believe you rose from the dead. You are living today. That's why you can hear me.

I receive freely your gift of forgiveness. I forgive everybody who has harmed me. Help me to forgive them, Lord.

I want to turn from everything that I know to be sin in my life. Everything that I know is displeasing to you. I don't want to do anything that you don't like.

Lord, I don't want to have any practice in my life where you'll have to walk out saying, I don't like that. I want to please you from today. Help me, Lord.

I believe you have received me. Listen to this word of Jesus. If you come to me, I'll never cast you out.

Believe that. Today, Lord Jesus, I believe. Those of you who are not sure, believe God's word.

If you have done your part, He has done His. It does not matter whether to know the date. Maybe you were saved ten years ago or now.

It doesn't matter, but you are sure today. Jesus has accepted you. You're forgiven.

And you're going to be a child of God. Now you need fellowship. You need to be with God's people.

You need the food of God's word. You need power. You need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Pray to God. He'll give you all that. Seek fellowship with God's people.

Don't try to live this alone. The child cannot live alone. It needs fellowship.

It needs to be helped as it grows up. Seek fellowship in a good church. You can make that decision in your heart.

And if you want help after the meeting, you can talk to folks here. They'll help you. Heavenly Father, I pray for those who are responding in their heart to you now.

I pray a miracle will take place in their heart right now. A miracle of salvation and a new birth. Give them real repentance.

Real faith. They will trust you. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Give them a hunger to be filled with God's Holy Spirit and power. Hunger for fellowship and hunger to read your word. Bless them we pray.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

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