

Water and the Spirit

by J. Henry Brown

J. Henry Brown's sermon explores the profound significance of being born of water and the Spirit as essential for entering the kingdom of God, drawing connections from Scripture and the transformative power of God in believers' lives.

Duration: 43:10

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:21, Ezekiel 37:1-5, John 3:1-8

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses a story about a sailing ship heading towards the Niagara Falls to illustrate a spiritual message. The ship represents people who are lost and in need of salvation. Despite the belief that there is no hope for them, a man points out that there is still a sign of life on the ship. This signifies that through acceptance of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit, people can be cleansed and made alive in Christ. The speaker emphasizes the importance of the wind, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, in bringing about this transformation and enabling individuals to enter the kingdom of God.

Transcript

Now, this morning I read to you a portion of Scripture, 2nd Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, and then we reminded ourselves of that very familiar chapter, Chapter 3 in the Gospel of John. Now, this evening I want to read two portions of Scripture in the Old Testament, and then we're going to turn our attention again to that third chapter of the Gospel of John. So, if you have a Bible with you, let's turn to the Book of Ezekiel, the Book of Ezekiel, and we'll read in Chapter 36.

Ezekiel, Chapter 36, reading from verse 21. Ezekiel 36, verse 21. But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went.

Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sake, or house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them. And the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be pleased. From all your filthiness, and

from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Now look at chapter 37. The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about, and behold there were very many in the open valley, and Lord they were very dry. And he said unto me, son of man can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God thou knowest.

Again he said unto me, prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live, and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded, and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bones to his bones, and when I beheld, Lord the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above, but there was no breath in them.

Then said he unto me, prophesy unto the wind, prophesy son of man, and say to the wind, thus saith the Lord God, come from the four winds or breath, and breathe upon these flames, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.

Now we can leave our reading there, and once again turn our attention to that third chapter of the gospel according to John, very well known chapter. We reminded ourselves this morning that this man Nicodemus came into the presence of the Lord, and evidently he wanted to speak to Jesus about the kingdom of God. He probably had questions to ask, and when he came into the presence of the Lord he admitted a fact.

He said, we know that thou art a teacher sent from God, and then we thought that the Lord Jesus as much as said, well we don't need to waste any time. You know that I am a teacher sent from God. Now I am the teacher, you are the student, and the subject is the kingdom of God.

Now the first thing I want to tell you about that kingdom is this, that except a man be born again, he cannot see that kingdom. He cannot understand it, he cannot comprehend it, it's just beyond him. And when the man Nicodemus said, but how can a man be born again when he is old? Then the teacher began to explain this a little further, and he said to him, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

In the first word, he could not see the kingdom of God. In the second word, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. And then we went on to see how the teacher added a little more as he went on talking of this man Nicodemus.

Went on to say, you know that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. And having said that, as much as said, well now you needn't marvel when I say to you, you must be born

again. And yet this man still would say, but how can these things be? And then Jesus looked at him and he said, art thou a master in Israel? Art thou a teacher in Israel? And not these things? I'm surprised at you.

You ought to know what I'm talking about. Why say, how can these things be? You ought to know. And then went on a little further, and said, you see the wind blows where it lifts us.

Thou hearest the sound thereof, cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goes. So is everyone that is born of the spirit. Now then, this morning I got you thinking about that particular verse where the Lord said, that which is born of the flesh is flesh.

And we tried to understand, and it would take a long time really to go into the matter thoroughly, but we did again a few things this morning as to what the flesh really meant. We had to go back to the book of Genesis in order to see something of man's constitution, and of what happened to the man when he sinned, how he became other than he was, how that now instead of thinking God's thoughts, and desiring God's desires, and willing God's will, that man has become entirely different. He is now thinking his own thoughts, and desiring his own desires, and willing his own will.

He's quite different. Before he was a spiritual man, and now he's a natural man. That is the flesh.

When that man took of that tree, he became other than he was. He became a natural man. He became a soulish man.

He became a self-thinking, self-desiring, self-willing, self-centered, selfish, sensual. That's what he became. Now that's the flesh.

So this morning, we were thinking of that, and trying to lay hold of the fact, and we began to see that God never intended to mend it, or repair it, or make it any different. When that took place, God was finished with it, and he was going to put it away. And we saw God showing us clearly enough that his intention was to put that flesh away once and for all, and he did it in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ on that cross.

When that won, by for all, well that was it finished. In that way, God pronounced ascendance upon the whole world, and he saw them dead. Now we know that the Lord Jesus Christ rose again from among the dead, but he didn't rise with what he took to the cross.

That was finished with. But he rose as the head of a new creation. If there's any man, he's in Christ.

He's a new creature. Now, these things we laid hold of this morning. Now I'm centering your thoughts in this other verse.

When the Lord said to this man Nicodemus, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Now, let us pay a little attention to this verse. Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Now, I listened to the verse very closely, and I noticed this, that in the original, the definite article is not there, so that if we leave the definite article out, then the verse would read, except a be born of water and spirit, not the spirit. Except a man be born of water and spirit, not the spirit. Now then, as we think of it in this way, it may help us a little bit to get this clear.

That word spirit comes before us again a little lower down in the chapter. He says, where? Well, where the Lord said, the wind bloweth where it listeth. Now, that word is the same, see? Except a man be born of water and spirit.

Now, he says, the wind bloweth. Now, we could change those two words, so we could say, except a man be born of water and wind, and then the spirit bloweth where it listeth. You see, it's the same word, but because those who translate were thinking, well it must mean this, or it must mean that, then they said, all right, we translate it, and it says, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, and then, well now it says, the wind, the wind bloweth.

Well now, this is going to help us. Except a man be born of water and wind. Now, we can take it as that, water, wind, you see, and a little lower down we could say, the spirit bloweth or breatheth, the spirit breatheth where it listeth.

Now, here is the sound thereof, cannot tell whence it comes nor whither it goes. We come back on that, but now let's look at it this way. First of all, he said, except a man be born of water.

Now, what did the Lord mean when he said that? Oh, say some people, he meant baptism, did he? Oh no, oh no, he didn't mean baptism. Except a man be born of water, except a man be baptized, except a man be christened. No, no, no, no, he's not talking about that.

Except a man be born of water. What did he mean by that? Remember, when Nicodemus said, how can these things be? The Lord said, art thou a teacher in Israel, and knowest not these things? Nicodemus, I'm surprised at you. When you heard me say, except a man be born of water and wind, your mind should have taken you to the writings that you know so well.

Your mind should have taken you a way back to the book of Ezekiel. You should have remembered straight away when I said, water and wind. You should remember.

I'm surprised at you that you don't remember that. So, we went back to that book of Ezekiel, and what did we read? Now, this has to do with the children of Israel. It has to do with the new birth of a nation, and that nation is Israel.

You notice, again and again, it referred to Israel. And so, there we have the new birth of the nation. How is it going to be brought to pass? God said, I will gather you out of all nations, bring you into your own land.

Then will I sprinkle you with clean water, and ye shall be clean. From all your fruitiness, from all your idols will I cleanse you, and I'll give you a new heart, and I'll give you a new spirit, and I'll put my spirit within you, and you'll be my people, and I'll be your God. You see that? Now, there are the evidences of new birth.

You see, the new birth of the nation. I'll cleanse you from all your fruitiness, from all your idols. How? By sprinkling upon you clean water, ye shall be clean.

Then, what follows? Well, here's the new birth, a new heart I'll give you, a new spirit I'll give you, I'll put my spirit within you, you'll be my people, I'll be your God. That's it. That's new birth.

You see, the new birth of a nation. But, a picture of new birth in the individual, and God is using it with this man, Nicodemus. Nicodemus, you ought to know what I'm talking about when I say, except a man be born

of water.

It's thought I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. Now, to these people, to Nicodemus and others who knew the Old Testament scriptures so well, when they heard this sprinkling with clean water, there was something else at the back of it. Oh, they wouldn't just think, oh yes, that's right, just water, clean water, and that thought would be sprinkled.

No, there was something back of it, you see. Now, let me tell you this. You know, in the book of Leviticus, you have brought before you the law for the cleansing of a leper, and this is a very remarkable law.

It says that the priest should examine the man who was the leper, and then he would command that two birds, alive and clean, be taken, and one of these birds was to be killed in an earthen vessel over running water, and then the living bird was to be taken, and it was to be dipped in the blood of this dead bird, and then lifted out, and it was to be let go, and it would fly away back into the heavens from whence it came, and then he that was to be cleansed would be sprinkled seven times, how? With that blood of the bird that was killed in the earthen vessel. Now then, this is a very simple little picture for the cleansing of a leper, but back of it, there's a tremendous lot that is of great interest to us. So, first of all, let us think of this.

Two birds were to be taken, alive and clean. Not one bird, two, and in the margin of your Bible it may say two pharaohs, or it may say two pigeons, or two turtledoves. Well, I don't take any notice of that.

What I do look at is that in the original, in the Hebrew language, it says two fowls of the heavens, or two birds of the heavens. Not pigeon, turtle, or whatever. Nothing.

It's only birds or fowls of the heavens. The thing is, they didn't belong down here. So, these two birds, alive and clean, are bringing before us the Deity of Christ.

He belonged up there, you see, but he came down here. So then, first of all, two birds, alive and clean, the Deity of Christ. Then, the earthen vessel.

That's the perfect humanity of Christ. When he came into the world, he sent him burnt offerings and sacrifices and sin. That had no pleasure.

Then said, I know I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God, a body hast thou prepared me. So, he took the body that God had prepared for him, so he might acquire the capacity to suffer, to shed his blood, and to die. So, there you have the earthen vessel, the perfect humanity of Christ.

Now, the bird was slain in the earthen vessel. There you have the death of Christ. Why two birds? Because if you had only one, then you could only bring out the death of Christ.

But God wants us to have more than that. So, he said, now you take the living bird, you see, and you dip it in the blood of the dead bird, so it is identified with the dead, and then it's lifted out. That is resurrection.

It's alive. Well, it's leading to death, yes, but it's alive. Now, he said, you let it go, and away it goes back into heaven, and that's the ascension of Christ.

Isn't it wonderful that in a little picture like that, that has to do with the cleansing of a leper, you have the deity, the humanity of Christ, and then you have these other truths, his death, his resurrection, and even more, his ascension, even more, that through the eternal spirit he offered himself without thought to God.

All of it comes out in that little picture. Now, look at it.

I used to picture this and figure myself, now what did take ... I'm always doing this when I read my Bible, I try to picture what took place. So, I said, now just what did he do? So, I hear the priest, you know, and got these two birds, and then it says, now if you kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water. I know.

So, there's a little stream of water. The water is running, you see, and he holds the earthen vessel over this running water, and he kills it. And then I thought, well that's right, that's what took place, you see.

And then it says, now you take the living bird, and you dip, you immerse, you immerse the living bird in the blood of the dead bird. And I said, he could not do it. You could not get sufficient blood out of one bird to be able to immerse another bird in it.

Oh, so I had to think back. When he held the earthen vessel over water that was running, then he was to dip the living bird in ... he couldn't do it. Oh, wait a minute, oh.

Now, I look at the margin, and it says, living water, living water. Not just running water, living water. And living water is a type, in the word of God, of the spirit.

So, I said, ah, now then, that living water, it's not running water, it's living water. Where was it? It was in the earthen vessel. So, now I've got that water, that living water in that earthen vessel, and he kills the bird, and its blood drips into that living water.

Now, he that is to be, he that is to be cleansed, is to be sprinkled with that blood, but by means of that living water. It was the water that conveyed the blood to the leper for his cleansing. Did you get that? So that the moment a Jew, or man like Nicodemus, heard this, I will sprinkle you with clean water.

He knew that back of that clean water there was something else. There was the blood. Then again, you remember, if a person in Israel touched a dead body, or a bone, they became defiled, and God said they must be cleansed.

How was it to be cleansed? Well, they took a red heifer, and they burned it all, burned all of it to ashes, and then they kept the ashes in a clean place. And when a person became defiled by contact with the dead, they took some of those ashes, and they mixed them with clean water, living water. You see? And then the person to be cleansed was sprinkled, what with? With the ashes, by means of the clean water.

So that now, as we're thinking of pipe, we realize this, that as we see the priest sprinkling this leper with that blood by means of that clean water, it is a picture of what takes place in new birth, when we are born again, that there is applied to us in the power of the Spirit, the living water, all the value of the precious blood of Christ, having endured our cleansing, our being cleansed from all sins. When the Lord said to Nicodemus, except a man be born of water, come on Nicodemus now, you're a teacher in Israel, what do you make of this? He should have said, ah, I remember Ezekiel, then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean. I remember too, that behind that sprinkling of clean water, there was something else.

There was blood, there was ashes, ashes, the evidence of a completed work, the evidence of the finished work of Christ, all applied in the power of the Spirit, having endured our cleansing, being cleansed from all sins. Do you get that? All right, so notice, now we know something about, except a man be born of water.

But, he goes on to say, and finished, no, wind.

All right, let's keep the wind. Now, we turn again to chapter 37 of the book of Ezekiel. Oh, now Ezekiel is brought into a valley, and that valley is full of dead bones.

Scattered all over the valley, there were these dead bones. And he was looking at them, not a very nice place to be in. And he was told that these dead bones, they were Israel.

Now God said to Ezekiel, have a good look at these bones. And he said to him that, do you think that these dry bones could live? I reckon he looked at them, and he said to himself, no I don't. But he didn't, he didn't say so.

He said, well you know whether they can or not. He put it back, you know whether they can or not, all right son of man. Now you prophesy unto these dry bones, and he prophesied.

And then to his amazement, when he prophesied unto these dry bones, there was a shaking, there was a noise, and bone began to come to his bones, until at last, now scattered all over the valley, there were completed skeletons. Not just bones, but skeletons that were complete. Bone had come to his bones.

And he's watching this, and as he looked at it, he could see now the sinews and the flesh coming up upon those bony frameworks. And then he saw the skin beginning to cover them. There they were.

Now this valley was full of body, no breath in them. There was no life in them. Son of man, prophesy unto the wind.

Except a man be born of water and wind. Son of man, prophesy unto the wind. Come, O wind, breathe upon these flames.

Amen. So he prophesied as he was commanded, and he saw all this taking place, but there was no breath in them. And then prophesy unto the wind, and he prophesied.

And there is the action of the wind, the breath, the breathing, the spirit. You see, that's it. The same thing, the spirit, the wind, the breath, the breathing, all of it has to do with the spirit.

And this was a quickening. There was no life in them, but now they are made alive. They're quickened.

They stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. So said the Lord, except a man be born of water, that's cleansing, and of wind, that's quickening. He cannot see the kingdom of God, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

All this is absolutely necessary. So then, here if we read into it, the wind blows where it lifts us. Thou hearest the sound thereof, cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.

Well, I say I do, and so I'm not happy at all to accept that as being wind. I know from whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. I'll tell you why.

Out in Africa to do missionary work, we were well away from any township. 20 days' journey, walking to get to a town. We had lots of people who would travel 15-20 days to get them relief from some disease, and we had to feed these people, and they came in, they didn't come in alone, they brought their families with them, and we had to feed them, and that feeding was quite a problem.

We could get plenty of flour, or meal in meal, as we called it, things like that, but you couldn't get meat or fish to feed them. So, very often I had to go off into the bush and do a bit of hunting. And I took with me an African, an elderly man, a very good man, and I noticed that whenever I said to him, all right, we'd better get out in the bush there and fight you off a few antelopes, you know, to feed all these sick people, he said yes, and he used to come out, as he came out, fastening a catskin to his hip.

And at first, you know, I wondered, what's he doing that for? But we went off and we walked through the bush here and there, a few miles, you know, and he was looking for tracks that he could follow, and at last he said, right, we've got some here, and let's go. So, he would lead on and I would follow, and after a while he would slow down a bit, and I would tread softly, because they're somewhere in front, just there, you see, and, you know, if they hear us, they'll be away, we'll have another two or three miles to go before we get up with them. So, gently, gently.

So, all right, all right, I don't want to go another three or four miles. So, gently, gently. So, we're stepping carefully, you see, and then he stops and he says, they're very close, but, you know, they've got noses, and they stick the noses up and they sniff, and if they get wind of us, they'll be away.

So, I said, what do we do? He said, wait a minute. So, I see him plucking off some of the hairs off that catskin. He pulls a few pinches of hair and holds them up like that, and then he flinches and he watches them coming down.

He wants to know which way the wind is blowing, or which way the breeze is coming, or even which way the atmosphere might be moving, because if it's moving in the direction of those antelopes, they'll be away, they'll smell us. So, he sprinkles a few of these hairs, and they're down, they come, and he watches them come down. He says, ah, the wind's coming from there, and it's going there.

We know from whence it cometh, and we know whither it goes. So, from whence it cometh and whither it goes, we know. So, he said, now, we'd better make a circular tour around there a bit, you see, so we've got the wind blowing to us instead of to them.

One day, I was walking, I was in England, and walking along a country lane, I saw an old lady in front of me, and she had a walking stick, and she was going along. So, I watched her, and every now and again she stopped, and she looked up. Well, I looked up.

I couldn't see anything. I thought to myself, well, if she can see an aeroplane up there, she's got better eyesight than I've got. I can't see a thing.

So, she walked on a little bit, and then, so I thought, well, maybe she's listening. So, I thought, if she can hear anything up there, she's got better hearing than I've got. I can't hear a thing.

So, she walked on, and then she stopped again, and she looked up. Well, I don't know what this is. So, I went along by her side, and she turned, and she told me, oh, she said, excuse me, sir, she says, the wind is blowing from the northwest, isn't it? Oh, there was the old weathercock on top of the church steeple, you see, and she was looking up there.

She said, it is blowing from the northwest, isn't it? I said, yes, mother, that's right. It's what we do know from Wempshick, Cummerson, Witherick, Gorse, you see. So, I said, the wind blows where it listed.

Now, here is the sound thereof. Can it tell Wempshick, Cummerson, Witherick? Yes, we do. Well, listen.

Instead of the wind, the Spirit. The Spirit breatheth where it listeth. You hear the sound thereof.

It cannot tell to Wempshick, Cummerson, Witherick, Gorse, nor is every one that is born of the Spirit. Oh, I can understand that. That's clear enough to me.

I'm quite satisfied with that. Yes, the Spirit breatheth where it listeth. You hear the sound.

That's the gospel, of course, and the gospel is heard, and the Spirit is there. There's the breathing. You hear the sound, and if there's any response, if a person responds to that, if he'll be led by the Spirit, to that breathing of the Spirit, then there will be cleansing.

There will be the application to that person of all the value of the blood of Christ in the power of the Spirit. There will be applied to that person all the value of the finished work of Christ in the power of the Spirit. First of all, for the cleansing, and then for the quickening that they may be truly born again.

Now then, I want you to understand this. We have looked at it, and we've had this before us, and we still might find that it's not too easy to follow, not too easy to understand. Well, as to whether you are born again or not doesn't depend upon you understanding it all.

It depends on this, that as you listen to the gospel, as your condition is brought before you, as the Spirit of God takes up the word of God and works in your heart and conscience to convict you of sin, of righteousness, of judgment, then it will lead you to repentance and to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you are willing to cooperate. You see, you ... I mean, for instance, if the Lord had been speaking to me, and he'd said to me what he said to Nicodemus, and he said, you must be born again, you know, I would have been trying to say, well, just a moment, what do you expect me to do about that? Well, you say to me, you must be born again. Well, now, will you tell me just how I can accomplish that? Can I born myself? Well, now, you say you must be born again.

You're telling me I've got to be born again, but how do I do it? I can't. You can't born yourself. When a child is born, it's passive.

He doesn't think the child isn't born itself. Neither can I born myself, you see. So, the Lord said to him, you must be born again.

I can't do anything about it. But, listen, whilst I cannot accomplish this, I cannot born myself, nevertheless, as to whether I am born again or not depends on me. It doesn't depend upon God.

God has made this gloriously possible. In the personal work of the Lord Jesus Christ on that cross, in the precious blood of Christ, in the finished work of Christ, there is that which will meet my needs. If I repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, I shall be cleansed from all sin.

I shall be quickened and be brought into a relationship with God in fact. That depends on me. God has made that gloriously possible, but as to whether it takes place or not depends on me.

God is not willing that any should take, and wherever the gospel is preached, God will be there in the power of the Spirit to convict of sin and righteousness and judgment, and he will seek to lead people to repentance and to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, it depends on you as to whether you're born again or not. What I mean is this.

I've come to understand that way up on the Niagara Falls, on the Niagara River there, there is a piece of land jutting out that was called Past Redemption Point, and we are told that any ship or any person, any boat that was in that river and it went past Past Redemption Point, it would never come back again. It would be lost. And many years ago, there was a sailing ship on the river, and they wanted to get it across to the other side, so they brought along a tug, and they made fast a big rope, and the little tug began to chug, chug its way across the river, drawing the sailing ship behind it.

When it got into the middle of the river, the current was very strong, and there was a tremendous strain put on the rope and the rope parted, and the sailing ship began to go along with the current down to the Niagara Falls. So the little tug tucked around, passed the line, made past another rope, and tried to hold that ship. But she got some way on her now, and as the strain came on the rope it parted again, and the sailing ship went down a little further towards the Niagara Falls.

The little tug tucked around again through another line, made past, but now it was even more impossible to stop that sailing ship. So the strain came on the rope and it parted, and that was it finished. And so the sailing ship was going right away down, nothing to prevent it from going over the Niagara Falls.

Well a lot of people were standing around, and they were watching it, and they were groaning and saying, oh my, all those sailors, all on board, they're going over there, this is death. The ship will be destroyed, the people will be lost. Nothing could be done.

If anybody had jumped overboard, they would never have got out of it. Over the falls they would have gone. And so the people were groaning, and they watched it, and as it went past, past redemption point, they said, she's lost.

That's it, she's gone. But there was a man standing there, and he said, you can see the top of the mast. They said, yeah, she's going.

He said, no, I reckon she's stopped, she's, she's pulling up. No, she'll never pull up. She'll go over.

You look, he said, those masts are coming slower and slower. And they watched, and they said, yes, that's right. And then he said, she's stopped.

No, she'll never stop. She'll go. He said, look, she's stopped.

And he said, yes. He said, and she's coming back. Never.

You look, yes, she's coming back. And after a little while, she looked, here was the sailing ship coming back, fast past redemption point. And as she came past, they saw that the sails were set, and the sailors were still busy setting other sails.

And she rounded the point, and everybody cheered, and they said, she's saved. How? How was she saved? Because when that ship, that sailing ship, rounded that point, past redemption point, the captain felt a breeze blowing on his cheek, and straightaway had all sails set. It did take those sailors long to get some of those sails set, and she steadied up, and then she stopped, and then more sails, and she began to come back.

She was saved. How? Because the captain cooperated with the wind that was blowing. After wedding, you were born again or not? Depends upon you cooperating with the wind that's blowing, cooperating with the

Spirit of God.

If He's working in your heart to convict you of sin, and righteousness, and judgment, seeking to lead you to that repentance and faith in Christ, it's for you to cooperate. It depends on you. If you fail to cooperate, then you're lost.

There's no hope for you. But if you cooperate, the Lord is there. He's not with an anxious person.

And the moment you hear that sound of the Spirit, the gospel, and you repent and exercise that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then God Himself, in the power of the Spirit, will apply to you all the value of that precious blood of Christ, all the value of that finished work of Christ, for your cleansing, for your quickening, for your being brought into that relationship with Himself. Born of the Spirit, that which is born of the flesh, that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I tell you, you must be born again.

If only born of the flesh, no hope for you. If born of the Spirit, yes, quickened and brought into that relationship with Christ. I hope this has been clear.

Word of God's a very wonderful book, and as we look into it, very often we find some wonderful things there, and if we are willing to be exercised before God with us, God can do something for us. He can accomplish that which He longs to accomplish, to cleanse us, to quicken us, to bring us into that relationship with Himself. But let us remember, it depends upon us as to whether we are born again or not.

When the people gathered in the little place, heard the gospel, were coming outside, there was a young fellow who walked alongside an elderly man, and he said, Bill, did you hear what that preacher said? Well, he said, he said a lot of things. Yeah, but he said, you know, at the end he said, uh, could anybody tell him who would be the next one to die in this village? Yeah, he said, I heard him say that. Well, he said, Bill, I could have told him.

Oh, he said, who? Well, he said, old George, you know. He said, oh. He said, you know, George, he said, he's got one foot in the grave now, he said.

You're hobbling around the village, he said, he won't last much longer. You mark my words, he will be the next one to die in this village. Oh, he said, you think so? He said, yeah.

Oh, he'll be the next. And three days later, news went round the village, there was somebody dead. Oh, that's old George.

No, it isn't. What? Not old George? No, he's still over there, look, hobbling, still there with one foot in the grave. Well, who's dead? Oh, a young man.

A young man who said, oh, I could have told him who'd be the next. Oh, yeah. He didn't know he was the next.

Who'd be the next? He doesn't know. Why procrastinate? Why put off? Why not, when God speaks to you, why not be willing and ready to cooperate? You know, if you're sick, not feeling too good, the doctor. You can't live 24 hours without you going to the doctor and have something.

No, but when it's a question of your own precious soul that's going on throughout eternity, well, you can play about, you can procrastinate, you can afford to sit back and take no notice. No, no, let's be sure of this. This is a very solemn consideration.

God has made provision, made possible, to wait for you. He won't force the issue. He won't make you.

He will help you. He'll make it clear to you, and He'll wait for you to cooperate. May the Lord help you to cooperate tonight, if you've never done this before, that you may be brought into this wonderful relationship.

Shall we pray? O God, our Father, we give our thanks to Thee for Thy help. We have been asking Thee for Thy help. Much has come before us in Thy precious word.

We have been looking into these things, we've been helped of these, and Thou knowest each one. Our hearts are open to Thy gaze. Thou knowest us each one through and through, and we do pray that if there's anyone here tonight who has yet has not cooperated with Thy Spirit to be brought to repentance and to faith in Thy beloved Son, that they may no longer procrastinate, but that they may be only too ready and too willing to cooperate, that they might indeed be cleansed and quickened and brought into this relationship with Thyself, that they may have a new heart and a new spirit and Thy Spirit within, that they shall be Thy people and Thou wilt be their God.

So we ask Thee for Thy blessing upon Thy word, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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