

(So Great Salvation - Part 3) Faith, New Birth, Witness of the Spirit

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in the process of salvation, distinguishing between different types of faith and highlighting the need for repentance and conviction.

Duration: 52:15

Scripture: Galatians 4:4

Topics: "Spiritual Awakening", "Genuine Faith"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of genuine faith and the process of spiritual awakening, conviction, repentance, and the new birth. It highlights the necessity of the witness of the Spirit in confirming one's relationship with God, contrasting it with mere intellectual assent or emotional responses. The speaker underscores the significance of true belief that leads to a transformed life in obedience to God, illustrating the journey of faith through biblical examples and personal testimonies.

Transcript

Reminder again of the meeting tonight at 7.30, preceded by our prayer meeting at 10 minutes to 7. We're encouraged by the number of people coming to the prayer meetings. We'd ask you to join us this evening at 10 to 7 in prayer and be in prayer throughout the day for Mr. Reedhead as he'll be speaking tonight. Remember the book table and the tapes that are available, the tapes of the meetings that we already have are already available.

You can purchase those at the table plus the tapes of Pastor Reedhead's services that are available at a special price. You might want to look those over. We're glad again to have Pastor Reedhead speak to us this morning hour.

Thank you. You've received the sheet that I talked to you about yesterday and I'd like to have you fill it in, bring it up to date. The first number that you have, number one, is conviction.

And the scripture that I asked you to have as a key scripture opposite the word is John 16, 7 through 11. And number two, number, pardon me, number one is, I'm sorry, I made a mistake. First one I ever made, so you will be gracious to me.

Number one is awakening. Number one is awakening. And number two is conviction.

And number three is repentance. And we'll deal with the scriptures relating to them a little later. I don't want to get my tang tumbled and give you the wrong scripture since I started out giving you the wrong.

Number four is faith. I want you to turn to Hebrews 11, 1 to 6. This is what I consider the key scripture. Now everything we're saying in this time we're spending together relates to Hebrews, the second chapter and the third verse, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? That is our theme, so great salvation.

But today the fourth step on this, and remember what we've stated, everything in the Christian life that begins as a crisis is preceded by a process and followed by a process. We don't talk to people about the crisis primarily. We talk about trying to find out where they are in the process and move them in the next step.

Because if we should somehow short circuit everything and bring them to the crisis, then all we've got to do is find some way to go back and cover the ground that should have been covered, would have been covered. God can do all of these things in a minute. I won't restrict him.

But when God does it, they're all done. It may take him only a minute to do it or five minutes or one day if that's his privilege. Most of us, I've found, have a little longer process in which these things, awakening, conviction, repentance, and faith can occur in as little time as it takes to state it.

But when it does, they're all there and they're all affected. And normally we see a person and we say, this man, this boy, girl, man, woman isn't even awakened yet to their need. And so we pray to that point and use appropriate scriptures.

And then when we sense awakening, we just trust and pray they don't fall into the hands of some speed expert that's going to give them four things to say uh-huh to and tell them they're Christians. If we're concerned about them, we're going to pray for them that they'll be convicted, that they're now sensitive to the fact that something is wrong, but they aren't quite sure what. And so we're going to use the word of God and ask the spirit of God to minister to them until they discover themselves and take sides with God against themselves.

They're brought under conviction. And when we sense that, that there's some awareness of their crime against God, then we can talk to them about repentance and bring those scriptures to bear upon their minds and tell them that God has commanded all men everywhere to repent and that repentance precedes faith. And except they repent, they're going to perish.

And they're going to say, well, what does it mean to repent? And then you can tell them that the essence of sin is I'm going to do what I want to do. And that means a total change of mind, change of policy or practice from pleasing self to a commitment to please God. And that if they're ever to know forgiveness and pardon in eternal life, they've got to settle the issue right here as who's to be boss.

Now that's the crime. They've been boss. Now, do you notice something a little different from what you've heard from time to time in the past? Have you ever heard people say, we accept Jesus now and six years later at a summer conference, we accept him as, accept Jesus as savior.

And six years later, we accept him as Lord. Well, uh, that is not biblical. Thou shall confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, or literally Jesus is Lord.

The essence of sin is I'm going to do what I want to do. And the essence of repentance is from today on, I'm going to please God. And there's no service, no saving merit in it at all.

It's just a change of attitude from who's going to be boss to the, uh, from the fact I've been boss up till now. And from here on, I'm going to do what God wants me to do. Now that's repentance, a change of mind.

And we are told that we are to be transformed by the renewing or the changing of our mind. And at any point in our Christian pilgrimage that we discover that our mind is not in accord with his, the issue's already been settled back there. We don't have to fight it again.

We're going to go right on in the changing of our mind always to conform to his mind as he's revealed it. Now we come to faith. And we were going to see it in Hebrews 11, verses one to six.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it, the elders obtained a good report. Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

So the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. And by it, he being dead yet speaketh.

By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death and was not found because God had translated him. For before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith, it is impossible to please him.

For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Now it's arbitrary that we've stopped there. Suffice it to say for the moment, however, that this is the only definition of faith that we have in the scripture.

Faith is a substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. I put it this way, faith is the sight of the soul. It's the eyes of the human spirit.

It's the ability to see what isn't there yet to see, but what's going to be there because it ought to be there. Faith, therefore, I just would simplify to say the sight of the soul. That's an oversimplification because there is more to it than that.

God's chosen illustration of faith is Abraham with Isaac. Do you recall that God had told Abraham that he was to take his son, his only son Isaac, down to the place that God would show him, the place of sacrifice. We know that was Mount Moriah where the temple was built.

Take him down there and to offer him to the Lord. Now Abraham was a man of faith and trust and obey are always the same. They're two sides of the same coin.

So he obeyed, but God never gave him a roadmap, told him how to go. And so what he did, he could have gone from where they were down to where he had to go, perform the sacrifice, and return the same day. But I don't blame him.

He went a little bit east about a day's worth, and then he went a little bit southwest about a day's worth, and then he came in. Now I know he wanted that time with this young man. He'd come to love him, so he made it a little bit longer than he otherwise might have needed.

Now God didn't scold him for that because he knew his heart. And when they got to the foot of the mountain and he was going to go up, he said to the servant, he said, now you wait here. Now here's faith.

He knew exactly what he had to do. He had to go up on the mountain, he had to put some stones together, he had to gather wood and lay it there, he had to have his son lie down on that wood, he had to raise a knife and kill his son and set the wood afire. That's what he knew what he had to do.

He knew what a sacrifice was. But listen to faith. You'll remain here for we will come again unto you.

He had a resurrection faith, and he said, I'll do it, but God promised that he was going to bring me a seed from this land. And if God wants him well and good, but God's going to give him back to me, gave him to me in the first place, he'll give him back to me again. Now that's faith.

That's God's illustration of faith, that God is able to do what he has promised. And God promised that he was going to give Abraham a seed through Isaac. And he was there to do it.

Now if you'll turn please to Romans, the fourth chapter, you're going to get a little insight into what God wants this faith of Abraham to mean to you. Verse nine. I'd like to read all of it.

Verse three says, for what sayeth the scripture, Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. And then in verse eight, blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. In verse nine, cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only or upon the uncircumcision also.

For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned when he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.

And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcised. For the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Therefore, in verse 16, it is of faith that it might be by grace to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to that which is of the law, but to that also which is the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Now, why did I read that? I'll tell you why. Because the kind of faith exercised in coming into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ is of the utmost importance.

Because the promise made by God to Abraham was not only to Abraham, his seed according to the flesh, but everyone that would savingly embrace God's dear son, the gift of his love. And that everyone born into the family of God through faith in Christ was to receive the promise, the heir to the promise made by God to Abraham, in thee and in all thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed. And everyone born into the family of God has the promise from God made to Abraham, namely for a worldwide blessing.

Now will you understand a little better why in Acts 1.8 it says, after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and unto the

uttermost part of the earth. Why? Because we're the heirs of the promise made by God to Abraham. In thee and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed.

So we're talking about a faith that not only savingly unites us to Christ, but brings us into a relationship where the promise that's made to Abraham can be fulfilled. Now in the years that God's privileged me to go over here and there serving him and preaching, I've discovered that there are several kinds of faith and they need to be identified. The first one that I have found is what I call a head faith, namely an intellectual assent to what is written in the Word.

There are multitudes of people in the church that think themselves to be born of God because they have intellectually, mentally assented to what they read on the page. And dear friend, the fact that you may have agreed that what God's Word says is true does not mean that it is true in you. It's true on the page.

But is it true in you? We must distinguish between what our minds perceive and our hearts have received. There's a great deal of difference and multitudes of people there are who think themselves to be right with God who have nothing more than the blueprint of the house that should have been built on the rock. Now both two houses, one built on rock and one on sand, had everything in common.

Both of them had the same floor plan. Both of them had the same front facade. They had the same number of rooms.

Everything about the houses was similar except one was built on rock and one was built on sand. And I personally have the opinion, and I don't make it a test of fellowship, that those who have an intellectual assent to the plan of salvation, that have never built it on the rock of awakening and conviction and repentance, will be those that in that day will find that their little house has been torn down by the flood of God's wrath. An intellectual assent, a mental agreement with what is written, is not the faith that we're talking about.

Then I find a second kind of faith, and it's equally devastating. It's called, I call it a dead faith. I found this among our Muslim friends when we were in the sedan.

I'll never forget the time that Said, our cook at the mission home in Khartoum, came to us. It was Sunday afternoon. The next, well that evening actually, they were starting out.

They were going to drive from Khartoum right on across the desert until they came to Lagos in Nigeria, about 3,500 miles of the hardest drive in the world. And the missionaries were going. That's how they were getting there.

And Said was going with them to cook and also to go home. He had left his home 44 years earlier on pilgrimage to Mecca. He'd been to Mecca twice, and now he was going.

And he came to a bedroom where my wife and I were, knocked on the shutter, and we went and opened it, and he said, I want to say goodbye to you. I'm leaving. He'd learned some English.

And I said, Said, you've been a very devoted man, haven't you? He said, yes, I've been hodgepodge twice. I've been to Mecca twice. I said, have you fasted every Ramadan, every Ramadan since I was a boy? That's a whole month where they neither eat nor drink nor swallow their spittle from sun up until sun down.

And he said, I said, have you tithed? Now, the tithe to the Muslim is not 10% of what they earn. It's 2% of what they possess every year. And I said, have you prayed? And they pray five times a day.

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I have been to Mecca.

I have observed every Ramadan. I have tithed. I have prayed.

Said, do you have peace in your heart? Do you know if you died, you'd go to be with God? Oh, no. No, I don't have that. I've done this in the hopes that my good works may be such that when I die, Muhammad will reach down and take my hand and help me across the abyss that I don't have to suffer.

I want to serve. I don't have the kind of peace you Christians have. What did he have? He had a dead faith, ritual, rites, taboos, things he couldn't do, things he could do, things he could eat, things he couldn't eat.

And he'd observed them all. But he was a dead faith. If I'd have said, is Muhammad living in you, he'd have laughed me to scorn.

He said, Muhammad is buried and his ashes are there in the Kaaba at Mecca. If I'd have said to him, does God ever reveal to you that you're his, he'd have laughed again. Of course not.

That didn't happen. He had a dead faith. There are multitudes of people that name the name of Christ who are associated with Christian groups that have accepted rituals and accepted taboos, and they abstain from this, and they observe that.

They've been baptized, or they've been catechized, or they've had this, or they've had that. But salvation is not a system of doctrine, not a system of taboos or rituals. Salvation is a person.

He that hath the Son hath life. They have a dead faith, everything but Christ. Now there's a third kind of faith that we found here and there.

It's called a devil's faith. This is an emotional response to the horrors of hell and the beauties of heaven. It's the kind that the demon expressed that day when he said, we are told to judge us before the day.

He had faith that Jesus Christ was the God and that he was going to judge them, but he remained a devil. We've been told that the devils believe, and they tremble, but they remain impenitent devils nonetheless. A devil's faith, that's an emotional response.

I don't want to go to that horrible place, and I like what I've heard about heaven, and I want to go there. And so I'll believe anything I need to escape the one and gain the other. It's a devil's faith.

You say, what is there left? Well, I'll tell you what's left. If you turn to Romans chapter 10 and verse 9, you'll find what's left. Because here we have a very distinct, a very definite statement and delineation as to the kind of faith that savingly unites one to Jesus Christ.

In verse 8, but what saith it? The word is near you, it's nigh thee, even in thy mouth, in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, or literally Jesus to be Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart, ah now, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. But do you understand why it's so important for us to have awakening to the need and conviction of the crime and repentance? Because he will not grant saving faith to anyone who hasn't repented. They

can have an intellectual assent, they can appropriate doctrines and submit to ritual, and they can have an emotional response, but, oh you sung it, did you know what you sang? I know not how this saving faith to me he did impart, or how believing in his word wrought peace within my heart.

Saving faith to me he did impart. What do you mean? Do you think for a one moment that an impenitent wretch who's trying to bargain with God can stretch the arms of his mind and spirit 2,000 years into the past, and see a Jew dying on a Roman gibbet, and believe that the death of that man could change his eternal destiny and his character? Without help from God. No, quicken, quicken, quicken faith.

It's saving, that's heart faith, in response to repentance. Now, that's why Paul taught to the people in Ephesus, I was with you night and day from house to house, to the Greeks and to the Jews and to all their teaching repentance toward God. And faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, but in that order.

For it's thus that heart faith is released. What does it mean to believe? What does it mean to believe? The word literally means to be, exist, live, or have your being, leaf on, in accordance with. Believe, belief is to live or exist in accordance with.

Now, it's been so abused that it's gotten down to this little tip your hat to what's written that I call head faith. But the word in the Anglo-Saxon, as the King James translator used it, was a good word. The illustration of it would be back in medieval Britain, when a lord, a duke, some important noble has an estate.

He's in a battle and one of his serfs, who's fighting alongside of him, stands between him. He's down, he's wounded, and the serf stands there and battles off all until they can take the duke away and spares his life. And in response to that, the duke gives freedom to this man.

We'll call him John, and we'll just call him John Freeman, so he can get a little insight. John Freeman. And he's had some land that has been given to him, and he has a team of horses and some cattle and some chickens and ducks.

He's got his own little place, doing what he always wanted to do, farm and live for himself. But because he was once related to the duke, he is still a subject to call. He promised that when he was given his freedom.

If I ever need you, John, will you come? Oh yes, I'll come. So one day into this tranquil farmer's yard comes a livery horseman. The duke has called for you, John Freeman, to be at the castle tomorrow at sunup.

Why? We're being threatened, and we must mobilize. Bring your bow, bring your arrows, bring your spear, bring your halberd, bring it. Anything you have, we need you.

So that day he gets ready. His wife understands. They don't sleep much that night.

They talk, visit. The last thing he does about 2 or 30 in the morning is go in and stand and look down at the little baby in the crib, his son John. He may not come back, but he has pledged.

And so he starts out carrying his arrows and his spear and his halberd, and he's going off through the night toward the castle. When he arrives, others are coming in, and he goes into the courtyard and waits. When daylight comes, the door opens and voice calls, and he's the first one called because he's a Freeman.

And so he comes in, and the duke is seated there and says, John, how are you? Oh, I'm fine, your grace. John, will you take my sovereign? Will you take it? Will you bite it? Oh, you know I will. And so one of the attendants comes over and gives him a gold coin.

And John puts it between his teeth, and he puts pressure on it and leaves his tooth print in the soft gold. That's as good as a fingerprint. He bit the duke's sovereign.

He took it, and he bit it, and it's put back, and his name is written on it. What does that mean? The duke says, John, you do believe on me, don't you? Yes, I do, sire. What did he mean, believe? He means to live, to act in accordance with the rule and the government and the command of the one whose sovereign he has been.

Now that's where the word belief came from, to come to the Lord Jesus Christ and so commit ourselves to him that we're going to live and exist in accordance with his will, as best we know that will, as long as we live. We're going to bite his sovereign. We're going to believe on him.

We're going to have faith in him. And it's not just to agree that what's written is true. It's much more than that.

It's a total personal commitment to the sovereignty of the one on whom we believe. That's what our faith means. With the heart we believed on him, not just that he did something, but because he is who he is and did what he did, we're going to obey him and love him and serve him as long as he gives us breath.

Now that's the people that we would call believers. Are you a believer? If you are, if you've been born into his family, you've come to number five, the new birth. In response to that faith, that kind of faith, two things happen.

In heaven we're justified. The record against us is changed. That is our standing before God is all as the just as if I'd, the meanings in the word, just as if I'd never sinned.

Our sins have been laid on Christ, counted to him, forgiven, pardoned, washed away, remembered against us, no more forever. That's legal. That takes place there in heaven.

And in our hearts, we're born again. God, this Holy Spirit quickens us, our spirits joined by him in that life-giving touch. We become, as it were, new creations.

He has restored contact with us. We have been born again. Now let me illustrate.

What does it mean to be dead in sin? Well, obviously we've got to use illustrations appropriate to our day. And I think one of the best illustrations is a television set. You get up in the morning and you go to put your television set on to see the early morning news, and nothing comes on.

No sound and no picture. And you turn to your wife and you say, well, the TV's dead. Now what's that mean? That it's annihilated? Does it mean that it's during the night all rusted down? You take a whisk broom and take the insides out of it in the dust pan? It's just all rusted away? Now when you look at it, it doesn't look dead.

It's all right there. What's happened? Well, a connection has been broken. Some transistor is out.

Some wire is loose. It's just separated. And death always means separated.

Separated so it doesn't work. Now God made us with receiving sets to know him. We have a receiving.

We live in three elements. We live in three atmospheres at the bottom of three oceans, if you wish. The first ocean we live in is the ocean of air.

And we got a receiving set. We call it our lungs. And we can get air to our lungs through two normal ways, through our nostrils and through our mouth.

And if someone wants to cover your mouth and pinch your nostrils, in a few minutes you're going to be a statistic. Because you've just got to have air. In it you live and move, and from it you have your being.

And you must have air. And you got a receiving set. Now the second atmosphere we live in, or ocean we live in, is electronic sound.

And all around us is electronic sound. You know, there's so much electronic impulse here, sound here, that if we were to bring it all out so you could hear it, we'd have to take the pews out, put in shelving up and down the rows here, wherever there's a row, and we'd have to put radio receivers on and television receivers, short wave, long wave. If we turned it all up to 100 decibels, probably the whole building would just shatter down.

There's a whole ocean of electronic sound surrounding us. But you got to have a receiving set to separate it and to hear it. And there's a third atmosphere in which we live.

It's called God. Paul said, on Mars, he'll in him we live and move, and from him we have our being. And we have a receiving set to know God.

And it's called the human spirit. But as long as the human being who owns that spirit is living in rebellion against God as a traitor, that has never been convicted of his crime and never repented of his crime and never exercised faith, that receiving set is dead. It doesn't work.

But when God in his sweet grace and wonderful power responds to that kind of faith that we've been talking about, the first thing he does is to repair that receiving set, that human spirit. Now, the tragedy of easy-believism is that the products of it get their assurance, whatever it may be, that they're a child of God, not from God but from somebody else. And the consequence is when they begin to doubt or question, and you're not there, you're the one who gave them their assurance, then they're in trouble, and a lot of them are just going to go away.

I tried it, and it doesn't work. We find today, in present-day evangelism, it takes about 200 first-time decisions for Christ to get one person that'll go on living for Christ two years later. Because so many of them have just been the products of the efforts of people, that when the people go and the hoopla goes, they're back right where they were and nothing is real, and so they just wash the whole thing off.

But if they've been born of God, and God has repaired that receiving set, and they find out from God that they're his child, makes a difference. Let me illustrate. Back in the early part of the 19th century, 1837 to 50, Charles Finney was having meetings in upstate New York, and he, God was blessing him, and he incurred the wrath of the Presbyterians, of whom he was an accredited clergyman, because he instituted something new.

He invented and established what we call the anxious seat. He would set up a section in the church, and he'd say, now this is reserved for the anxious. Now, who were the anxious? They were the awakened, or those under conviction, or those moving toward repentance.

And they'd be given a ticket with their name on, and they'd come in and they could sit in this section. And sometimes when Finney was preaching, he'd go over and he'd talk for a time to the anxious. One time when he was in Albany, New York, he was in a church there, and the entire State Supreme Court of New York State came to the meeting.

And midway in the service, the Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court of New York stood up and just stood there, and Mr. Finney recognized him and said, Mr. Chief Justice. And the gentleman said, Mr. Finney, you have carried your case. The evidence is convincing.

If you are prepared to open the anxious seat, I am prepared to come. And he came down into there. And in the course of that meeting, every member of the State Supreme Court of New York State came to the personal knowledge and experiential knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But because he established this new and novel thing, the Presbyterians kicked him out. And then the Congregationalists took him in. Henry Ward Beecher in New York City invited him, and he became into New York and into that section of the Congregational Church.

But Lyman Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher's brother, and they were both brothers of Harriet Beecher Stowe, but Lyman Beecher was pastor up in Boston, and he didn't want Finney in the society he was part of. And so he began to raise claims that Finney's converts didn't stand. Ten years after Finney had been in Rochester, New York, Henry Ward Beecher appointed a blue ribbon committee of outstanding citizens to go to Rochester and make a study of the converts that had been there, that had been made, made professions of faith ten years earlier when Finney was in Rochester.

And you know what they found? They found that 85 percent of those who had made professions of faith under Finney's ministry in New York ten years later were living for Christ! Now compare that to one half of one percent two years later, and you get some idea how far we've gone from the Word of God. I say it this way, dear heart, no one in the universe has the right to tell a person they're born of God except the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of adoption. He has never ceded that right to anyone.

He reserves that as his sovereign prerogative. The only one that has the right to tell a person they're born of God is God the Holy Ghost. Turn please to Galatians chapter 4 verses 4 to 6. Now let the Spirit of God speak to your heart through this portion, this very important portion of the Word.

But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Do you understand? Because you are sons, because you've been born into the Father's family through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

You know, when John Wesley began to preach in 1737, the churches of England closed to him. He had to preach even at Epworth, where his father had been rector, outside. They wouldn't let him in the church.

He stood on his father's tomb and preached to all the people of the village. And the reason that he did that was because they closed the churches to him was because he said, it isn't enough to have your name in

the church book being baptized as an infant. It isn't enough that you've been catechized, that you've been taken into the church as an adult.

You must have the witness of the Spirit that you're born of God. And they wouldn't let him preach in the churches. Now, at first, he was very hurt about this.

Then he realized that this is God's way of letting him get to the people. So from then on, he accepted this as being the divine method, and he would send somebody into the community where he was planning to go that week to tell the pastors, the rectors of the Anglican church, that's about all there were, that he was coming. And would they let him use the church? You always ask to go in.

And the word went back, no. And then the rector would send people all through the village. Wesley is coming, and he'll be here on Wednesday, and we won't let him use the church, and don't go and hear him.

What would you pay for that kind of advertising? Now, I know it worked. I remember when I was a boy up here in North Minneapolis, for some unknown reason, my mother leaving home, leaving me with a babysitter, said, and my little brother said, now, children, whatever you do, don't put pussy willows up your nose. And I'll tell you the truth, we never thought about it, but we couldn't wait until she was out of sight.

There must be something wonderful about putting a pussy willow up your nose. We had to go to the doctor, and he had to snare it out. So you'll understand how God provided for Wesley when he said he had a thousand people.

He had a thousand people, because the rector's got them for him. And what did he say? No one has the right to think themselves a child of God unless they have the witness of the Spirit to the new birth. And they go, what's that? Feeling? No.

Emotion? No. Well, what is it, Mr. Wesley? And then he would quote Job, there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. And he would quote, the part of a man that knows the things of a man is the spirit of man that is in him.

And he'd say, the part of you that knows you're here and not somewhere else, the part of you that knows you're married and not single, or single and not married, the part of you that knows you're a man and not a woman, or a woman and not a man, that part of you is the part that God joins in the new birth. And when God quickens your heart in this new creation, He tells you and you know, because you know that you know. Do you understand? That's what the witness of the Spirit is.

Let me close. I was talking to this theme at an InterVarsity alumni meeting up in the Upper Peninsula in Michigan, at Cedar Campus or Point, whatever it is. When I finished, one of the staff members from New York City, Harriet Marsh, who attended the church in New York, said, could I speak? And she came to pulpit, or the rostrum, and she said, many of you know that my parents were not Christians, but perhaps you didn't know that my father was an atheist and my mother an agnostic, at the least, probably an atheist as well.

I never went to church except for one funeral and a wedding until I went to college. But when I got there to Douglas College, which was the women's section of Rutgers, New Jersey State University, she said, I saw one young woman whose face was so radiant, whose personality was so charming. I asked about her, and I found out she was a believer, a Christian.

The one who was in charge of assigning rooms was a friend of my parents, and I asked if I could become the roommate of this young woman when her senior roommate, who was leaving at the January, left. And so I was given the privilege of moving into that room to be next to this person. I was only with her for a short time until just seeing her and talking to her, and listening to her pray and speak put a great hunger in my heart, and I opened my heart to come to Christ.

And I went to prayer meeting, and I went to Bible studies, and it was just a new life to me. But there was one professor over at Rutgers who knew my father and knew me and shared their atheist views, knew my mother, and he would take me out to lunch and asked to see me and would look for me. And every time he did, he said, Harriet, you've got to give up this ridiculous nonsense, this religious superstition.

You've got to stop it. And he worked on me and worked on me. You've got too good a mind.

You're too brilliant a student. You can't. Until finally, I just succumbed, and I went to my roommate, and I went to the Bible study, and I said, look, you're nice people, and I like you, but I've been deceived.

I'm not a Christian. I know it's just been a mental, emotional thing, and because of your warmth and your attractiveness. So I'm giving it all up today.

I don't want to give up your friendship, but I don't want you to ever talk to me anymore about the Bible or about Jesus. I'll never come to your prayer meetings, your Bible studies. I want to be friends, but just not that.

And they agreed, because you see, she didn't say the important thing, don't pray for me, because if she'd have said that, then she'd have said she wasn't an atheist. So she ignored that, and they prayed for her. Well, one day in the library, Harriet came across that agnostics prayer.

You know what it is, don't you? Oh God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul. And she thought, huh, now that's all right. That's kind of honest and fair.

So she knew her roommate was out, and she went back to the room and locked the door, and she said, well, I'm going to do that as one last thing. And so she's practicing, oh God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul. And so she said, well, I used to kneel, so I'll kneel, and I'll close my eyes, and then some people fold their hands, so I'll do everything.

I'll kneel and close my eyes and fold my hands, and she's practicing, oh God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul. And then she gets quiet, and she starts out, and her first words are, dear heavenly Father. It had dawned on her what she'd said, and she started to laugh, she started to cry, she got up, she opened the door, she ran down the hall to where the girls were in the Bible study, and she came in, and she said, it's real, it's real, it's real.

Why? Look what you just read. And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, whereby you cry, Abba, Father. Do you see it? Do you understand it? Faith, a new birth, and the witness of the Spirit.

Those you minister to must come that route, and if you've been brought any other route, today's the day to take care of it. Let's pray. Father, look deep into our hearts this morning, find us where we are, and if there be unfinished business in any life, may this be the day when wisdom is exercised, instead of going to lunch, they go to the place where they can meet Thee.

And Father, for those of us that have unsaved loved ones and friends we're burdened about, now we've seen the steps of awakening, and conviction, and repentance, and faith, and the new birth, and the witness of the Spirit. Oh, Spirit of God, help us to be laborers faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, to honor Him for His name's sake. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/O2j9PQBeCbA.mp4>

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