

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

This sermon script is furnished with
the good wishes of the Reorganized Church
of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

Program Number 270
Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister
All Rights Reserved

The Sermon: NEW CREATURES IN CHRIST

Scripture: II Corinthians 5:16-21

Wherefore, henceforth live we no more after the flesh; yea, though we once lived after the flesh, yet since we have known Christ, now henceforth live we no more after the flesh. Therefore if any man live in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, And receiveth all the things of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Put off the old man And put on the new man, which
after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

In every man there is a nature which is in the likeness of God. We are told in scripture that man is made in God's image, a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor. Man was made for fellowship and friendship with God. His better nature yearns for God. Like the prodigal son, he is lost and restless and miserable in a far country until he comes to himself and returns to his Father's house.

In every man there is another nature -- a nature which is contrary to the nature of God -- a nature which is rebellious, carnal, sensual, devilish, and ruled by the lusts of the flesh. Christian theology says that this nature is the result of the fall of Adam. In Adam, sin became a part of the heritage of the human race; the result or consequences of his fall have been transmitted to every one of Adam's posterity. Thus Adam's rebellion becomes a part of your nature and mine.

This fallen nature is "natural" in that it is the natural and inevitable consequence of Adam's sin and fall; but in another sense, it is not natural, because it is contrary to the nature of God, and contrary to the laws and principles of his universe. Man, who in his original innocence was made to be at home in God's universe, finds that his rebellious and fallen nature frequently puts him at cross purposes with God and with God's universe. He has lost the dominion

which God intended that he should have over the world in which he lives.

The life of man is a constant struggle between the upward pull of his God-like nature, and the downward pull of his fallen nature. But no man in his own strength can fully resist the downward pull of the carnal nature. Neither can he yield fully to the upward pull of the God-like nature. All men sin. Even a small degree of sin brings guilt. Guilt brings shame. Shame brings fear; and fear brings enmity. The fallen nature of the sinner causes him to hate God, because he is ashamed and afraid to appear before him. The fallen man is an enemy to God. Becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, rebellious, willful, and wicked, he turns his back on God, and puts as much distance between himself and God as possible. If he follows that fallen nature, he drifts further and further away from God.

Suppose that the better nature, encouraged by the Spirit of God, urges the sinner upwards, towards God. He strives, he struggles, he thinks he has everything under control, and then in spite of himself he sins again, and he is right back where he started -- beset by guilt, shame, fear, and enmity for God. No man in his own strength has ever found it possible to keep the whole law of God. For the fallen nature, perfection is impossible. We cannot possibly lift ourselves by our own bootstraps. We are powerless to rid ourselves of the sin that so easily besets

us. Seneca, a Roman philosopher who was contemporary with Jesus, but who probably never even heard of him, recognized this truth in his own life, for he said: "All my life I have been trying to climb out of the pit of my besetting sins -- in vain. And I never can, and never will, unless a hand is let down to me to draw me up."

We are talking here in spiritual terms. Perhaps, therefore, an analogy from the physical realm may help some to understand. We divide all material objects into three kingdoms -- mineral, vegetable, and animal. One kingdom in its own strength, can never lift itself into a higher kingdom. The mineral kingdom has within it no life or power to raise itself into the vegetable or animal kingdom. But if we plant a seed, or a bulb, or a shoot from a vine -- if we place that higher life down into the mineral kingdom of the soil, and if the mineral kingdom will yield itself unconditionally to the new life, then with the help of the life of the higher vegetable kingdom, the soil can be lifted up and transmuted into the vegetable kingdom.

So the natural man who is an enemy to God can never lift himself into a heavenly kingdom. The life of God's kingdom, the new life which is the same life that raised Jesus from the dead, must come down from heaven, be born or planted in the old man. The man must surrender himself completely, must die, must become humble, meek, submissive to the new life. Then, and only then, can man be transformed and transmuted into the heavenly kingdom. Man can never rise above his own nature except in Christ. Education, training, psychology, evolution -- none of these can raise him. He must be born again. He must receive of Christ's life. He must become a new creature in Christ.

Man does not so much need to be reformed as he needs to be transformed. He needs not a gradual evolution -- day by day in every way getting better and better -- but a moral and spiritual revolution. He needs more than just a little added strength to overcome his weaknesses; he needs a new mind, a new life, new heart, new will, new spirit. He needs more than education so that he knows right from wrong; he needs a new nature that will make him choose to do the right he already knows.

Most of all, fallen man needs to be forgiven. He needs to be assured of God's love and grace which reaches out even to

sinful men to reclaim, to restore, to renew, to transform. Unless he can be born again, and know that he is a new creature in Christ, he will continue to know guilt, shame, fear, and enmity for the God who cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.

How does the new birth come? How does it happen? Nicodemus demanded to know this -- probably as a subterfuge to cover up his refusal to accept the need for it in his own life. Jesus did not choose to attempt any explanation. He said: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one who is born of the Spirit." No one can explain to another just how the new birth comes; but thousands who have experienced it know that it does come, and that it brings a complete transformation of personality, and makes the old sinful man into a new creature in Christ.

There are certain principles and prerequisites which must be observed if one is to experience the new birth and become a new creature in Christ. There must first be a response to the Holy Spirit and to its upward pull. There must be humility -- a recognition that one's own strength is not enough. There must be a faith and a belief in Christ -- in his power to save, to cleanse, to pardon, forgive, restore, and heal. There must be a sincere and honest repentance for past sin, and a willingness to surrender it all to the pardoning power of the new life. There must be obedience to the ordinances by which this new birth is transmitted -- the ordinance of baptism in water, and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Spirit, performed by those whom God has called and authorized to commit him in this adoption ceremony by which men and women become his spiritually begotten sons and daughters.

Are you still struggling to achieve righteousness in your own strength? Have you spiritually been born of God? Have you received his image in your countenances? Have you experienced this mighty change in your hearts? "Put off the old man, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by this renewing of your mind," for "if any man live in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."