

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: THE NATURAL MAN

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:70-78.

The time shall come when all shall see the salvation of the Lord; When every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall see eye to eye, and shall confess before God that his judgments are just; And then shall the wicked be cast out ..... And this because they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord; therefore the Lord redeemeth them not, for they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them; Yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil. Thus all mankind were lost; and behold, they would have been endlessly lost, were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state. But remember, that he that persists in his own carnal nature, and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state, and the devil hath all power over him. Therefore he is as though there was no redemption made; being an enemy to God; and also is the devil an enemy to God.

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The natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be for ever and ever.

There is much in modern man to admire. He has his moments when he is akin to God. There is in him a living spirit which was made in the image of God, and which manifests much of God's love, mercy, kindness, justice, patience, wisdom, and forgiveness. Sometimes he shows a truly God-like concern for others by defending them or rescuing them from danger at the risk of his own life, by supplying them with food, money, and other tangible assistance in time of famine, pestilence, or disaster. He risks his life oftentimes to bring to benighted nations the blessings of education, the refinements of civilization, and the salvation of Jesus Christ. On occasions he reaches God-like heights of self-sacrifice and devotion to ideals. When we see men thus responding to God, we feel with the Psalmist that man was made a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honor.

Yet twice in the last half-century these same men who have such unlimited capacities for godliness have found themselves involved in a great world war which stripped off the thin veneer of civilization and revealed that underneath men were still beasts and devils, who could become as cruel, as ruthless, as wicked, as recklessly contemptuous of human life and human dignity as any stone age barbarian.

Individually, as well as collectively, man presents this same paradox. We are a strange mixture of the devilish and the divine. Is there a single human being who at some time or other has not had cause to be amazed and ashamed at the depths of evil he finds in his own nature, when he suddenly realizes that the carnal, sensual, and devilish impulses within him have somehow taken control in spite of all his good resolves, and led him into that which is unseemly, if not downright vicious and sinful? Even such a good man as Paul seemingly found this contradiction in himself, for he wrote to the Roman saints: "The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."

In the beginning, God made man in his own image -- a little lower than the angels. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God and disobeyed his commandments, sin and evil became a part of the physical heritage of all their descendants, and as a result of the fall, man became carnal, sensual, and devilish. The natural man, then is the physical man, whose body inherits the ancestral and sinful tendencies of the fallen race. This natural, unregenerate man is an enemy to God. He stands in complete contrast to all that God is, and all that God wants him to be. He is self-centered, instead of God-centered.

tered. He is self-willed and proud, rather than humble and meek, and willing to submit to God's will. He is rebellious and repentant, instead of submissive and sorry for his own sins. He is carnal and sensual, rather than spiritual. He is cruel rather than kind. He is unforgiving and vindictive instead of forgiving and merciful. He loves not his neighbor -- only himself.

Some unregenerate men and women, because they have the benefit of Christian teaching and righteous example, have learned many Christian graces. Others keep up the appearance of righteousness because they are afraid to suffer the ridicule or punishment that will follow if they violate the laws or customs of their group. Nevertheless such people are basically unchanged. They may be negatively good, in that they do nothing scandalously bad, but their evil natures are still unchanged, unregenerate. No amount of teaching or good example ever regenerates the human heart. Only God can create a clean heart, or renew a right spirit within man. Man cannot do it himself; he cannot do it for another man. Even one whose outward actions seem good can have an evil heart within -- can be in rebellion against God. And if man's heart still yearns for evil, even though he remains morally good because he lacks the courage to be bad, he is a bad man who will show his true nature the moment the policeman's back is turned.

Even when we recognize our innate depravity, there is little we can do about it in our own strength. It is perfectly useless to tinker with our faults one at a time, for while we are working to correct one, another will develop. That is why education -- important as it is -- is completely unavailing to cleanse man's heart to change his basic nature. That is why the restraint of the policeman can never make a bad man good. What every man needs is a new birth -- to be born again from above. He needs to have the spiritual life of Jesus Christ come into his life and take over, transmuting the base nature of the carnal man into the refined and pure nature of the spiritual man. Let us illustrate. Soil is dead, inert, lifeless, powerless to lift itself from the mineral to the higher vegetable kingdom. But place the life of the higher vegetable kingdom down in the dead soil in the shape of a seed, and the life of the vegetable kingdom changes and lifts and transmutes the dead soil into a living plant, and into a higher kingdom.

Just as the soil is powerless to lift itself to the vegetable kingdom, so the natural man is powerless to lift himself to the higher spiritual kingdom; but if the Spirit of Jesus is planted within him, if he is born again from above, his nature which was dead in trespasses and sins can be made alive in Christ, and changed, lifted, transmuted into the life of his heavenly kingdom.

The new birth can come only through the Spirit and power of God; but it depends on our response. The Spirit of God invites all men to repentance, to godly sorrow for sin, to faith in Jesus Christ and in the redemptive sacrifice and atonement he has made for us. We can yield to those promptings, those enticements to a higher and better life, or we can reject them and go on in our wicked rebellion, pride, and self-sufficiency. God never forces any man to receive or to accept the new birth. He invites us all to come, and waits patiently for our response.

When a man is born from above, his whole nature is changed. The direction of his life is changed. His outlook on life and his attitude towards God are different. The things he once loved and desired he now hates; and the things he once hated he now loves. Some people have erroneously believed and taught that being born again is the end of the road for the Christian. It is only the beginning. A man newly born from above is no more grown up than a new born baby. He still needs to grow up, to become mature in the new life he has begun. The new life is no guarantee that he will never again have to face temptation, or even that he will never again surrender to sin. The new life is a guarantee that the new-born man is on God's side; he is now a member of God's family and one of God's adopted sons. He can rightly claim all the power of God's omnipotence to help him in his battle against temptation and evil. If he should sin through weakness or neglect, the new life in him will not let him rest until he has repented, reversed his error, found forgiveness, and been reconciled to God.

The natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be for ever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and becomes as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, ready to obey his Father in all things, and to receive the new life that God alone can give through his Son.