

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: SONS AND HEIRS OF CHRIST

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Mosiah 11:186-192.

I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold, I am born of the Spirit. And the Lord said unto me, Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men, and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, must be born again; Yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; and thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God. I say unto you, Unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off. Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God; My soul has been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God.

Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?

There is one supremely important requirement for entrance into the Kingdom of God, which is frequently overlooked or deliberately ignored both by clergy and by laymen. How many times have you heard evangelists say that the only requirement for salvation was to call on the name of the Lord, to confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, or even just to raise your hand as a sign that you believed? And how many times have you heard others say that all that was necessary for salvation was to live a good life, to do good works, and to follow the golden rule? All these are certainly part of the necessary requirements of salvation, but they are not the whole. Jesus himself said that many who confessed and cried "Lord, Lord," would be commanded to part from him; and that many who had done many wonderful works in his name would likewise be rejected. Something more than confession, something more than good works, is required for salvation.

The supremely important requirement for salvation in the kingdom of God is that we be in possession of the life that is in Jesus, that we be enlivened by the Spirit and power which raised him from the grave. This new life, this new Spirit can come only through a new birth. The natural man is an enemy to God; he is under sentence of death; he cannot create that new life within himself, for death never creates life. Many must repent, re-

nounce the old man, crucify him with his affections and lusts, and then be born again from above. He must be spiritually begotten of God before he can have this new life.

Soil is dead, inert. It belongs to the mineral kingdom. It can never enter the higher vegetable kingdom by its own power. Not until it surrenders itself to the life and that higher kingdom and through that life is changed into a plant or vine or tree, can the soil ever enter the higher vegetable kingdom. So it is with us. Until we have surrendered our lives to the control of God's higher life -- his Spirit -- and renounced the lower kingdom, we can never attain to the kingdom of God. Calling Jesus Lord will not bring us this new life, this new birth. And though we may do many wonderful and good works in our own strength, we shall find them out-numbered by the works of the flesh, unless the life and Spirit of Christ dwell in us.

Many people who have cried "Lord, Lord," who are satisfied with their church membership, and who may even have done many wonderful works, have never felt this change. They have never been born again, or received the new life of the Spirit of Christ. What indicates the possession of that new life, that new Spirit? The test is: "Do you manifest the fruits of the Spirit?" Paul lists

those fruits in the 6th chapter of Galatians, as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The life which manifests these things is a new life; for the natural man, on the other hand, is known by his manifestations of the works of the flesh, namely: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like

Notice how many of the "works of the flesh" are the direct opposites of the "fruits of the Spirit." If a man claims to have been born again, to be a member of Christ's kingdom, and manifests hate instead of love, strife instead of peace, pride instead of humility, wrath instead of gentleness, and drunkenness and lasciviousness instead of temperance, can his claim have any validity? When the old man, the natural man, the man of flesh is in control, the works of the flesh will always be made manifest. When the Spirit of Christ is in control, the works of the flesh will disappear, and the fruits of the Spirit will be made manifest. The test is as simple as that. Confession is not enough. Correct belief is not enough. Good works are not enough. The test is, "Have you the new life of the Spirit of Christ?" "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

In the same sermon in which Peter said that all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, he also commanded: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." That Holy Spirit will not dwell in unholy temples. The cleansing of repentance and baptism is necessary to prepare the way for the new life of the Spirit which fits us for God's kingdom.

Several times in scripture, particularly in the Book of Mormon, there occurs a phrase similar to this: "Except ye repent, ye shall in no wise inherit the kingdom." Jesus was expressing the same thought when he said that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom. The physical body of man is tainted by sin and death. It is corruptible. It is not capable of enduring God's presence and power and glory eternally. A new kind of life, a

new kind of body which only the Spirit and power which raised Jesus from the dead can bring to us, must be ours if we expect to enter the kingdom of God and claim our inheritance there. This new life is not simply given as a gift. Neither is it created in us. It is begetten in us, and as a result of this begetting we are born again from above. Only by this process can we become the sons and daughters of God; and remember that the inalienable right of inheritance belongs only to his legitimate, faithful, and obedient sons and daughters. Only God's sons and daughters --those who have been born again from above and have continued obedient and faithful to the end, can inherit his kingdom.

We do not receive the full inheritance at the time of our new birth. We must wait for the full redemption, for the perfect life and the perfect body, until the resurrection. But we do not have to wait for the new quality of life which is characteristic of that perfect kingdom. Our faith and hope for the future are based on an indubitable reality which is experienced here and now-- namely, the life of the Spirit within us. Paul characterizes this Spirit as the "earnest" of our inheritance -- the down payment which binds the contract and guarantees that more of the same kind of payment will be forthcoming at its completion.

This spiritual life which is the earnest of our inheritance as God's sons and daughters is not a life which ignores the body and its needs; neither is it an immaterial existence, but rather one in which body and spirit are restored to their proper relationship with each other and with God. The body was meant to be the tool, the implementation of the spirit. The spirit was meant to control the body. If the body controls the spirit, that is abnormal and wrong. When the new life of the Spirit of Christ comes to us as a result of the new birth, the body is brought under control; it becomes the servant of the spirit instead of its master, and both body and spirit become sons and servants of God.

"Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" If not, ye must repent and be born again, born of God, thus becoming his sons and daughters, and heirs to his salvation and his kingdom.