

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: THE TEST OF THE NEW BIRTH

Scripture: Selected verses from I John.

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. Whosoever is born of God doth not continue in sin, because he is born of God, having received that holy Spirit of promise. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. Let us not love in word, neither in tongue only, but in deed and in truth. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

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How can you know whether you are born again? How can you know whether I -- or any other person is? There should be certain tests which may be applied, certain signs and easily discernible attributes by which the new birth may be made manifest in the lives of men. We shall attempt in this short talk to take notice of some of them.

We should observe first, however, that the new birth does not come by the will of men. God -- and only God, can give it. Only he who gave life in the beginning can give the new life that comes from above. We are not born again merely because we have submitted to certain ordinances or outward rituals of the church. The ordinances may be -- and we believe are -- a necessary means of grace, but we should never confuse the ordinances themselves with the grace that comes through them. Many who have more or less tacitly or routinely accepted the ordinances have remained basically unchanged -- have never really experienced the new birth.

It should be noted, too, that the new birth comes to different people in different ways. To some it may come suddenly, cataclysmically, resulting in a complete, and radical change in life's direction, as Saul was changed by the

vision on the road to Damascus. To others, who perhaps have been nurtured and taught in a good Christian home, the new birth may produce little visible change, and it may be difficult or impossible to give the moment and hour when it occurred. The results are what counts -- not the process. No one has any right to demand that the experience of the new birth in all others must be exactly like his own, for no two experiences are exactly the same.

There is probably no one test which can fully demonstrate or prove the reality of the new birth; but several tests, all taken together, can. We should therefore be careful also not to assume that we have undergone the new birth because we have had a single experience, or because we can pass a single test, while much more still remains to be achieved.

The first test which we shall consider is thus stated by John: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." He who is born of God will confess that Jesus is the Christ, for if he is truly born again, the life of Christ dwells in him. Not all who confess Christ are born again, for there is such a thing as purely intellectual assent without conviction.

The devils confess that Jesus is Lord, but they are not born again, for they do not obey him, or seek to become like him. The man who is truly born again has Christ within; Christ is known to him and he is known to Christ. He knows that Jesus is the Son of God, that he is Lord and Savior. This is a truth that must be spiritually discerned. More than an intellectual assent is necessary to produce this kind of assurance.

The second test is that he who is born again will be humble. He will have confessed past sin and he will be aware of present unworthiness to be called a child of God; but he will also have an unshaken faith in Christ's power to atone for and forgive his sin. He will have the assurance that he is forgiven. Because he is forgiven, he will know no fear of God. The unrepentant, unregenerate man is an enemy to God. He who is born again is God's friend, God's son. He does not fear to bring his life into the dazzling light of God's presence for his inspection and approval, because he has faith in Jesus Christ, who is his advocate with the Father. Because he is forgiven and justified before God, he will find fellowship with God -- the fellowship of a son.

As a result of confessing Christ, and coming to know and love God, and to have intimacy and fellowship with him, we become partakers of his divine nature, and we walk in his light. We judge our own lives as God judges them -- by his light. We bring our lives and our deeds to him and to his light that they may be made manifest. It is only those who are afraid to have their deeds brought into the light of God who turn their backs on him and stand in their own shadow. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." The third test of the new birth is that we walk in the light, as he is in the light.

If we walk in the light, this means that we do not practice sin; we do not go on sinning. We keep his commandments. This is the fourth test of the new birth. "Whosoever is born of God doth not continue in sin....." The new life which is born as a result of our faith, our repentance, and our restoration to the fellowship of God, will find expression in continuing obedience. Sin is contrary to the nature of God. If the born-again man is taken by surprise, or inadvertantly sins, he does not continue in it; he does not practice sin. He repents of it,

claims God's forgiveness, and continues to do the deeds of righteousness. The fourth test of the new birth is that "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."

The fifth test of the new birth is "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." He who loves God as Father, and who accepts the love and forgiveness and grace and mercy which God so freely gives, is under obligation to love all of the family of God. One who is truly born again will have no room in his heart for hatred of any other man who is a brother in the family of God. He will be very careful to give no offense and do no harm to any other man. His love for the brethren will be active as well as passive -- practical as well as emotional. If he sees a brother in need, and has the means to meet that need, he will express his love by sharing his material goods and wealth. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue only, but in deed and in truth!" This is one test of the new birth.

The sixth test of the new birth is, "Do you have eternal life?" Eternal life is a quality of life, not just a quantity. Immortal life, life that lasts forever, may be lived in a place of banishment from God; but eternal life is lived only in God's presence. We know that the mortal body we have now must die; but the life that is lived in the mortal body may be the life of God and Christ, which is eternal life. It can be the life of joy, peace, and love. It can be the life imparted by the Spirit of God, which is an "earnest" or a small token payment guaranteeing the full payment that is to come. We do not have to wait for death and the resurrection to have eternal life. "These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life," wrote John. "And this is the record, that God hath given (not "will give") to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Have you been born again? We have suggested six simple tests. Whether the process be sudden or gradual, whether the change be little or much, we may know that we have been born again if we confess that Jesus is the Son of God; if we have experienced God's free forgiveness even as we confess our sin and unworthiness; if we walk in the light; if we do not continue in sin, but obey God's commandments; if we love the brethren; and if we have eternal life, now.