

Evangelistic Sermons

(Doctrinal Series)

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CHAPTER EIGHT -

THE NEW BIRTH

"Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

The Bible says **"God created man in his own image; in the image of God created He him."** That's the simple story of how man was ushered into the world. Some people say they don't believe it. Instead of saying, "I believe in GOD the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and earth," they say, "I believe in the chaotic nebula, self-existent evolver of Heaven and earth." Instead of saying that GOD created man in His own image, they improve on the word of GOD by telling us that our ancestors were common chimpanzees, and that GOD never made us at all.

The whole thing started way back yonder in some tiny, infinitesimal speck of unexplainable something which grew and developed and changed until at last through a series of differentiating processes it was finally rationalized and perfected into man, and if you want to trace your ancestry you must go back through all the countless years and see yourself in the chimpanzee and the monkey, and then farther back find your great grandparents in some amphibious, trogloditic creature about 18 inches long and 4 inches wide, says Darwin, and then on back to some wriggling worm in the slime bed of some stagnant pool and so on ad infinitum-ad nauseam-until you shake hands with your former self in the shape of this wonderful, insignificant so-called primordial germ, whose origin the Darwinists have never been able to discover and which I have an idea must be a mystery to GOD himself. Because you know it is that way. Huxley and Darwin said so.

Now it don't take a great deal of sense to criticise the word of GOD, although I quite freely admit that a few, but only a few, of the world's greatest thinkers have done so. But they look mighty small in the eyes of GOD when they undertake to match their little worldly wisdom over against what His own infinite mind has revealed to be the truth.

Some fellows will dam up a little rivulet. pile up some dirt on either side and make an artificial lake and then puff up as though they had created the Pacific Ocean. At first we had the pine knot for a light: then came the tallow dip and the candle: then we got the gas and now Edison has given us electric light, but to hear some of these wise-acres talk it won't be long till some one crawls up into the sky and blows out the sun.

What is man? Not much, when you are thinking about GOD.

GOD says man was made in the image of his Creator: that means:

- he had an understanding that could know the things of GOD:
- he had a will that delighted to do the things of GOD,
- he had a heart that loved the things that GOD loved.

Then the temptation came and man fell: the temple of the most high GOD he debauched with sin and the SPIRIT of GOD went out: He forsook the polluted spot.

And now follows the descent of a ruined race. The record says: "And Adam begat a son in his own image - not in the image of GOD, but in the image of Adam, with the image of GOD marred and defaced.

This is what the Bible means by being born in sin and shapen in iniquity.

And the word of GOD says that until the image of GOD is restored by the incoming once more of the SPIRIT of GOD, that man is spiritually dead, and he can not appreciate the things of GOD. This is the meaning of the new birth - the restoration of the image of GOD by the re-incoming of the spirit of GOD through JESUS CHRIST.

Now, notice, if you please, the text. It says that unless you are so born again you cannot see the kingdom of GOD: it does not say, "May not," it does not say, "Shall not." It says, "Cannot."

By the very nature of the case the thing is impossible - you lack the essential conditions for seeing anything of the kind.

Every creature born into this world has a nature after its own kind. You can't train a bird to crawl. for the same reason you can't train a snake to fly. True to his nature, a caterpillar crawls, and when we see him fly we don't say, "What an accomplished caterpillar" but we say the creature has been changed - it's got a new nature - it's been born again: it's a butterfly. The same thing is true of the natural and spiritual man.

You might as well expect a mummy to speak and bear children as to expect the merely natural man to appreciate the things of GOD so as to do them without being born again or being born from above. You might as well try to think with your foot or to love with your hand.

Water will never rise above its own level. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh . . ." You can cultivate it, and improve it and refine it. You can send it to church and make religious flesh out of it, but you can't regenerate it.

But you might as well try to lift yourself by pulling at your boot straps as to try to generate within yourself that quality of life that will lift you into the kingdom of GOD.

Peter says we are made "partakers of the Divine nature." That's what makes you a child of GOD and if you are not a child of GOD, then you are a child of the Devil, and that's all there is to it.

I saw an apple tree the other day doing double service. It was bearing two kinds of fruit; on one

side there was a lot of little runty crab-apples that would give the stomachache to a hog.

These were the original apples but on the other side of the tree the limbs were all yielding big mellow pears, juicy enough to make a queen's mouth water. Pears growing on an apple tree! Sure, and you know how it came about. One day the fellow who knew how to do it went out into the orchard and sawed off a number of limbs; he took a keen bladed knife, split open the stalk left on the tree, sliced an edge on some pear sprouts, pushed them down into the split, poured bees wax in all over the wound, wrapped some rags about it and went away, and a few years afterward I pulled the pears and ate them and I know they were fine.

Now what had the man done? He hadn't pruned the tree; he hadn't cut off the superfluous sprouts; he hadn't bought a squirt gun to spray the tree to kill the caterpillars; he hadn't fertilized it; he might have done all these things and had sour fruit after all; but he didn't. What did he do? He just grafted a new nature into the tree and that settled the whole business. And that's what every unsaved woman and man in this building tonight needs.

"Made a partaker of the divine nature!" Now this is where you see the difference between a man's morality and a Christian's righteousness. And it's a mighty big difference - the difference between reformation and regeneration.

Some of the worst men on this side of hell are reformed men. I know a fellow who was once a drunken old bum, and he reformed and became the keeper of a brothel. He reformed again and became a gambler. He reformed again and became a gentleman of leisure. Once he rolled in the gutter, but now he sits in his diamond-studded shirt and latest cut of clothes on the piazza of a high-class hotel. Quite a difference, you say. Yes. Reformation did it, but he's the same old child of the devil just the same, Morality is mere outward adornment.

The Christian's righteousness is the fruit of a new nature implanted by the SPIRIT of GOD. This is why GOD says that until a man's heart is right, his own self-manufactured righteousness, his culture and his respectability and his reform are like **"filthy rags"** in His sight. They are the mere outward adornment of the flesh. Its like Rebecca's hair. Her sweetheart was saying "Good night," and stroking her head, he said, "What lovely hair you do get." It wasn't the real stuff.

Some people try to make out that the thing a sinner needs is a change of environment, but if it isn't in a man's heart to do right he'll go wrong wherever you put him. If there's something wrong with the old clock that hangs on the wall, do you think you can make it work by taking it out in the garage and hanging it up there? No, you can't. The trouble is in the works. and you've got to dig down into the nature of the thing and fix it up there; and that's the way it is with you. You're wrong in your works; that's what's the matter with you; you've got the devil in you and you'll do what the devil says no matter if you change your environment a dozen times a week. It's not a new town you need; it's a new nature; and when you get that, you'll be a Christian and do the will of GOD in one place as well as another.

Some of the Jews thought that circumcision was going to save them but they were given to understand that it was inward circumcision of the heart that was needed. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. It may be decent flesh, or indecent flesh, pious or profane flesh, religious flesh or irreligious, but it is flesh just the same and you can't turn it into spirit by education, or

amelioration, or civilization, or cultivation, or any other than regeneration. "**Ye must be born again**".

Don't say it is an old fashioned doctrine, because if you had a nature that could appreciate it, or a soul that could see it, it is as new as the morning light that flashes through the sunshot gates of the eastern sky.

You say, tell me in a single sentence what it is, so I may understand. I have already told you what it is. I might try to make it plain, but neither your mind nor mine could ever fully understand it, but I can tell you of one of the greatest architects of this country, who came into one of our meetings bound and fettered with awful sin, but who in all the years since that night has been free, and I would ask you to listen to the story of his life from those who know him and hear them tell you of the marvelous change that has come into his life.

But you say, "How does it take place?" Yes, says the white fingered, aesthetic college professor, "Tell us how; we want the modus operandi." "Yes," says Nicodemus. "How, Master, how can these things be?"

Ah, that's the mystery these little minds must leave with GOD. But that's not the only thing you can't understand. You explain electricity to me or sit in darkness till you do. Tell me how bread becomes the basis of your physical life, or refuse to eat until you do. Tell me how my brain can lay hold on spiritual thought and weave it into a sermon. Tell me how GOD kisses a handful of soil by your cottage door, and when He has kissed it the air becomes perfumed with blushing violets. Tell me how he grasps the infuriated storm by the forelock and shakes it into obedience. How can these things be?

But some one says, "How can I tell when I have been born again?" Listen. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But when I see the trees bend and the dust fly and the ships sailing away, you don't need to tell me the wind is blowing. And so I can tell whether or not I have been born of the SPIRIT of GOD by seeing whether or not the SPIRIT of GOD is doing His work in me.

You don't need a Bible to tell you and yet it tells you very plainly.

First. I John 5:10: "**He that is born of God hath the witness in himself.**" If you are walking in newness of life and trying to keep yourself unspotted from the world, you'll know you are a child of GOD. You'll feel differently about GOD. You'll think of Him as your Father, instead of some far-off supreme Being. You'll find it easy to believe in GOD's word, and what it says about your salvation, and you'll have a conviction about the matter that will bring you peace.

Second. I John 5:1: "**Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born in God.**" You say, "I believe that." But how do you believe it? Do you give mere intellectual assent to it. or do you believe it with your heart? The devil believed the other way; he was so orthodox that he trembled. But have you confessed JESUS as your CHRIST? If you really believe a thing in your heart, don't you think you would confess it with your mouth. If you believed in JESUS as your CHRIST, you'd take Him wherever you go, introduce Him to your friends, and you'd be proud to

bear His name, and you'd confess Him.

Third. I John 3:14: "**We know that we have passed from death into life because we love the brethren,**" If you're born of GOD you'll love each other. You Episcopalians will love the Methodists, and you Methodists will love the Episcopalians and the Baptists and all the rest of them. I've seen Denominations get to scrapping over a lot of things and I've seen individual congregations all torn to pieces by strife and dissension and I tell you it's all of the devil.

It makes no difference what a man's social position is; really it don't make any difference what the color of his skin is, if he is a child of GOD, and you have the spirit of GOD in you, you're going to love him as a brother, and you'll take a delight in doing it too.

Fourth. I John 5:4: "**Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world.**" I tell you this ought to cause some of you church members to wake up and examine yourselves. Instead of overcoming the world, you are being overcome by the world.

Do you remember when old Ulysses was coming back from his siege at Troy - the experience he had in the land of the Lotus eaters? When he came to their country he anchored his ships and sent three of his men inland to learn something of the people who lived there. The men were treated with great hospitality and given some of the Lotus plant to eat. The effect of this food was so pleasing to the senses as to cause those who ate it to lose all thought of home and loved ones and wish only to stay in the land forever.

Ulysses waited but his men did not return and he went after them but they would not come. And by main force he had to drag the men on board and when they were securely tied beneath the benches of Ulysses' ship, the company sailed away, Just so there is a land of fruit which has a similar effect upon the soul.

It is the realm of worldliness into which so many Christians wander and where so many worldlings live. James tells us that to live there is to be at enmity with GOD, and to indulge yourself in its fruits and flowers is to do so at your peril. So sweet are they to the carnal nature that they throw a charm about the soul and in your passion for these things, GOD and duty and the salvation of loved ones and the things of CHRIST in general are all forgotten.

Paul says, "**They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts.**" A thing that is crucified is supposed to be dead, and if your old nature was dead, and you had really been born again. you would find that some of the things you love so much now would begin to lose their charm for you.

You say, "I just dearly love to read novels." But I wonder if you "just dearly love" to read the Bible. There's a grain of truth in most novels, but too often it's a good deal like the jewel in a bucket of pitch - you get your fingers dirty going after it.

Some of you novel readers would get your fingers dirty if you touched your Bible - not from anything on the inside of it, but from the dust on the outside of it.

You say, "I just dearly love the theatre and the dance and the card party." Well, those are the

things all worldlings love. There's many a poor girl who knows she ought to be a Christian, and who might shine for GOD, and be an inspiration to her young friends, but the poor, silly, little thing would rather dance with the arm of some empty-headed young sport thrown about her than to be a Christian and do what GOD wants her to do.

And there are a lot of church members like her, too. Paul says, "I am crucified to the world." A crucified man, I repeat, is supposed to be dead, but some of you make a mighty lively corpse when you get around where the things of the world are being pulled off.

If you were born again and had the SPIRIT of GOD in you, you would love the things that GOD loves. Of course, a man who is ruled by his carnal nature would rather play golf Sunday morning than go to the house of GOD for worship. He would, and she would, a thousand times rather go to a show and watch a lot of half-dressed girls, or girls in tights like you wouldn't want your daughter to appear in, come out and whirl on one toe than to go to prayer meeting, where GOD and the church have a right to expect them to be found.

"He that is born of God overcometh the world," but the world will always be your master until you give GOD the rightful place in your life. And that place is on the throne room of your soul. And GOD's SPIRIT rules instead of the world, you never can be saved. And GOD's SPIRIT never will rule until you've been born again. **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

Fifth. I John 2:29: **"Every one that doeth righteousness is born of God."**

What is righteousness? Why, it is that which is right in the sight of GOD.

Before I became a Christian I did as I pleased and I never stopped to consider whether it pleased GOD or not. But after I became a child of GOD I never made a mistake that I didn't fall on my knees and ask forgiveness and promise GOD with all my heart that I'd be a better man. And that's the way with you if you have not been born again.

It's not enough to believe the Bible: nobody believes the Bible more than the devil: you must practice what the Bible teaches. It's not enough to belong to the church. I ask some of you people if you are Christians and you say, "Why, I'm a Baptist." Well, there are Baptists in hell. And Episcopalians too. And Methodists in hell. Yes, and Presbyterians. It's not joining the church; it's doing the will of GOD.

I ask you if you are a Christian and you say you've been confirmed. Yes, you've been confirmed, but have you been converted? Have you been born again?

You say you've been baptized. But do you think that's going to save you? Shucks, no. In Acts, the eighth chapter, it tells about Simon being baptized, and he was baptized in the right way too, if one way is any more right than another, because Phillip did it, but when Peter came down there, he said to him, **"Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God."** And there he was, the old son of perdition, baptized and going straight to hell.

None of these things are any proof that you've been born again, but when you try to find out the things that are pleasing to GOD. and then do them because they please Him, that's evidence that you've been born of Him.

Sixth. I John 3:9: "**Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.**" Now, that doesn't mean he never will commit a sin. Some terrific temptation may sweep down upon him and before he is aware he has fallen, but if he is a Christian he won't go on in that sin, but he will go like Peter and weep bitterly because he fell, and repent of his sin. There are a lot of people in the church today who make sin the practice of their lives. Sometimes it's secret sin and nobody knows it but themselves. Of course GOD knows it - you can't deceive Him - and sometimes everybody else knows it. But if you make a practice of doing wrong, you are a child of the devil, as sure as you are born and you will be in hell, "**He that is born of God doth not commit sin.**"

Now it's like this - you take a sheep and let him fall into the mud and he'll get out as quick as he can, and if he can't he'll cry and bleat till you lift him out and when he's out he'll never go near that spot again. But the hog - let him get in and he'll lie down and grunt with satisfaction. You can drag him out and scrub him up, but he'll squeal while you are doing it, and run for the mud as soon as you turn him loose. It's a difference in the nature, don't you see? The hog likes the mud and the sheep doesn't.

A Christian may make a mistake and go wrong, but he won't lie down in his sin and stay there. When you are born again the old hog nature is a thing of the past. The illustration is old, but it is a good one.

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you except a man be born again. he cannot enter the Kingdom of God."

I am talking to people here tonight, who in their serious, better moments long for something, they hardly know what, for a peace and a rest and for something better than anything they have had. But you can never get it until you have been born again. I am talking to people here who really in their better moments want to know the real meaning of life and this their earthly existence, but you never can know it until you have been born again. I am talking to people now who are not Christians, but who really never intend to miss Heaven. But where in GOD's name is your hope?

Do you want a life that is rich in meaning with the evil past all canceled and naught of the haunting dread of an uncertain future? "**Ye must be born again.**"

Do you want to go down in the valley of the shadow of death and be able to say, "**I will fear no evil.**"

"Ye must be born again."

Do you want to come up in the glory of that new and unending resurrection life that JESUS CHRIST brought with Him from the grave? "**Ye must be born again.**"

Do you want to meet your loved ones on the flower circled banks of Heaven's eternal river? **"Ye must be born again."**

Do you want to stand fearless in the hour when the unredeemed tremble before the judgment of the Great White Throne? **"Ye must be born again."**

Do you want the approving smile of GOD to rest upon you throughout all the endless years of Heaven's unclouded eternity? **"Ye must be born again."**

You say, "How?" By the surrender of your will to GOD, and by saying "Yes" to JESUS CHRIST and receiving Him, for **"as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God."**

You say, you will not do it. Then my brother, the only message I can leave for you to-night is this:

You may run hither among the allurements of the world crying **"Peace, peace,"** but you can never know the peace that passeth all understanding and is the sweetest thing the human heart has ever felt.

You may see many glorious things of enrapturing beauty, but you can never see the glory of that City whose splendor is brighter than the noonday sun.

You may hear music, the richest and sweetest this world has ever produced, but you can never hear the redeemed of GOD sing in the Lamb's bright hall of song above.

You may drink from many sparkling waters, but never from the fountain of life springing up by the side of the throne of GOD.

But you need not be lost, for you may be born again.

I plead with you to turn your back on your unbelief and the life that leads to hell and receive JESUS CHRIST to-night.

GOD loves you and wants to save you.

When GOD was about to make man in His own image He called to Him the ministering ones who wait constantly upon Him before the throne and turning to the first one he said,

"Justice, shall we make man?"

And Justice said, "No, Lord GOD, don't make him, for he will trample on your laws, and break every commandment you ever give him; he will profane your name and pollute your sanctuaries; he will be untrue to his vows, insult the HOLY SPIRIT, controvert your Word and shake his fist in your face. I know what he'll do and I'd never make him."

Then GOD turned to the second one and said:

"Truth, shall we make man?"

And Truth said: "Lord GOD, make him not; I know what he will do. He will controvert Thy word, insult Thy gracious SPIRIT, and turn away from his Creator with heartless ingratitude. If you take my advice you'll never do it."

Then GOD turned to the third and said:

"Mercy, shall we make man?"

And Mercy dropped upon her knees, looked up through her tears and said, "Yes, Lord, make him; I know all that Justice and Truth have said is true, but I will watch over him, and when he forgets Thee I will whisper to him of Thy love, and in all of the sin of his life, I will tell him of Thy forgiveness, and though he become vile and utterly undone in wickedness, I will follow him all the dark way that he may tread, and I will woo him in tenderness back to you and Heaven."

Then GOD made man in His own image, and when He had made him, He said, "Oh, man, thou are the child of Mercy! Go."

Yes, Justice and Truth were right, GOD has put us in this beautiful world where every prospect pleases, but only man is vile - we have gone to the farthest limits in sin and down to the lowest depths. We have profaned His name, violated his Sabbaths, lived in adultery, drunkenness and debauchery in general and trampled beneath our unholy feet the atoning blood of His only Son given to redeem us. But GOD has never forgotten us, and His mercy has followed us all the days of our life, and to-night Mercy is looking through those tears once more and calling you back to your GOD, who is waiting now to forgive you. Will you come?

~ end of chapter 8 ~
