

REGENERATION:



*"Do not marvel that I said to you,
'You must be **BORN** from above'."* John 3: 7

PLAIN SPEAKING BECAUSE THERE IS A NEED.

IT may be that the reader has his own ideas as to what a "religious leaflet" ought to be, and likewise his own ideas of acceptance with God. Possibly he at once rejects definiteness about sin and its punishment as out of place. "**It is neither scientific, nor respectable**" says he, "**to call men 'fallen creatures'**". But there is at least one alarming fact. While you, my reader, are discerning how men should be described, others are passing into eternity. Where are they going? Have **your ideas** sufficient proof, that dying men **may rest on them**? If not, I reject them at once and entirely. I am not here to take "a chance". **My life is too precious to stake it on an unproved word.** An opinion that pleases men by promises **without a guarantee** – is a **lie, a cruel lie**. I would rather be plain-spoken and offend, than lull to sleep with **A LIE**. A lullaby to hell is a miserable comfort, and, while I fear many are singing this lullaby, I dare not sit still.

We have to deal with facts as they are, and we have to show a fitting seriousness, **for facts are serious**. How many are **today** on their deathbeds? Let us think upon **ourselves** more closely! How long do you assume you will live? How many years? O for a deep concern in your heart, – and mine. A man has no right to pen such a leaflet as

this, nor to give it away, unless he **feels realities**. But if he does **feel** them, tell me – Has he a right to be silent and indifferent? A thousand times, **no**.

The words of the Lord Jesus are often startling. Again and again we find it so. You will probably agree with me. But men have become “used” to them, and it seems Satan's aim to blunt their edge. Should we not be startled, if we heard, for the first time, such expressions as, “Woe to you ... hypocrites”, “You are of your father the devil”; “These will go away into everlasting punishment”; “Never has forgiveness” and “You must be born again!” Whose words are these? They are the words of the Son of God. We do not repeat them merely to alarm. Far from it. Does the reader imagine that the object of these lines is to bring terror? If so, he misses the point. Our longing is that many readers may experience a peace never known before, and a joy that is abiding. But we need a ground for peace, and it is our responsibility to point out that the standpoint of Christ is altogether different from that of the twenty-first century; and that the choice is – His words, **or** giving to **Him** the lie. It is this that appals us. The Lord Jesus Himself unvaryingly emphasizes **REGENERATION**, i.e. a new birth. But, directly or indirectly, most people are denying this today. Shall we reject Christ's testimony? That is the plain issue, and such an issue is vital. O how great is the love of God that makes it possible still to declare His love and the way of life.

Permit me, dear reader, to be personal. You are possibly as respectable and religious as many, or more so, but have you been born again? I have asked men this plain question, and though they have professed interest in Christ, they have been compelled to reply, “I cannot say so”. Indeed, many would need to reply, “I do not know what you mean”. May I ask you, – “What do you understand by Christ's emphasis on being **BORN AGAIN?**” Have you any fixed idea, or has it not troubled you? Common indifference in this matter is amazing. A new birth is essential before entering God's Kingdom. The Lord Jesus has clearly spoken this. Yet the majority put the whole question on one side, as irrelevant, and trust to something else. Trusting to something else is madness, if Christ is true!

Should we not deeply consider this question, before going any further? I repeat – What is it to be born again? There are many who openly deny the necessity. “I have always tried to do my best, and you can't do more”; “My religion is: Do to others as you would be done to”; “I have always liked good things”; “If a man leads a straight life, that is enough”; “I shall stand as good a chance as those who go to church”. All these claims miss the mark. God is not compromisingly indulgent. He allows nothing short of perfection before His throne. How could He, He must be consistent with His own perfection. If there is to be righteousness, it must **be** righteousness. Woe to them that call darkness light. And “As good a chance” is no chance.

To be born again (John 3: 3) is to pass out of death into life (John 5: 24), to be made alive and delivered from one's natural state (Eph. 2: 1-5), to become a new creation (2 Cor. 5: 17), to experience the work of the Holy Spirit within (Rom. 8: 16), and all because the Holy One died for the guilty. Amazing love! The Lord Jesus, alluding to the flood, spoke of birth **out of water**, in John 3: 5, – not **baptism** in water, but a **changed position** from the flood-waters of wrath. I wonder how many readers are willing to acknowledge such a change as absolutely **necessary**. How many are willing to say, “I confess myself a sinner under God's wrath!” Not many truly feel this. The statement “We are all sinners” is quite different. A personal wretchedness under judgment is a background for blessing. The fact that God does not bring all through exactly the same **experience** and length of anxiety is misused to lull many to sleep, and they think that they are all-right when they are still **all-wrong** – outside Christ. “Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15: 7) is a precious testimony. God heals the broken in heart (Psalm 147: 3). But where are the passages which speak of joy without repentance, or healing without the broken-heart?

As physical life has a definite beginning, so has spiritual life. Before a man is born again, he exists, but true life is harmony with God's will. The **entire** change is marked out in many Scriptures, e.g. “Out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Peter 2: 9), “You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord” (Eph. 5: 8), and “Far

off – brought near” (Eph. 2: 13). So complete is the change, – truly a miracle. But this is not today’s opinion. The idea is not popular. What then shall we say? Shall we say that the Lord Jesus made a mistake? Far be the thought. There is only one alternative. And what is that? – **The 21st century is hopelessly wrong.** Men **need** to be born again, and they do not know this. Their peril is imminent, and silence is a scandal, if any of us know the peril. We **must** preach **CHRIST!**

Nothing else will take the place of being born again. It is so in the natural world. There is no substitute for **birth**. At the risk of wearying the reader, let me repeat the ever-decisive words of Christ, “Unless one is born again (lit.: from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God”. “Cannot” means “cannot”. Many alternatives are proposed. **Reform** is held out as a hope. But it leaves past guilt untouched. Nor is reform availing when a man is **dead** in sins. Reform implies that the condition is not so serious, and thus it flatly denies the testimony of Christ. Shall we try “**religion**”? The Latin meaning of this word “religion” convinces us of its powerlessness – “Binding back”. There is no radical change: there is no life-giving power in binding back from sins. If any regard this as only a “religious leaflet”; they make a mistake. We have no confidence in religion **till** a man has a precious Saviour and His glorious salvation first.

Ritualism is only one form of religion, and ceremonies cannot bring in life. In a country town I wished “righteousness” to be written by a child on my blackboard. She wrote “Rites”. Her mistake in SPELLING is that of many in **reality**. “Rites” will never deal with sin.

Evolution is a popular word, to cover ignorance, and to leave out God. But, as in nature, so in the sphere of grace, Evolution is a misleading failure. A Christian will never evolve from an unsaved person. Circumstances did not make Adam obedient in Eden, and they cannot develop or educate a lost sinner into the family of grace. God, in mercy, says, “A new creation”, and nothing else will do. You and I cannot develop spiritual **life** from spiritual **death**. Men do not acknowledge their **dead** condition, and so have no room for regeneration. As soon as they acknowledge this, they have no room for anything else. Let me see myself a sinner – and I humbly cry out

for mercy. I want the precious work of God, and coming to Him in despair, my heart soon learns that there has been a new birth, and I enjoy faith, because my Saviour died; and my heart praises God. How grateful each believer should be in view of such mercy! Regeneration is a fact. Let not any troubled sinner attempt to fathom the working of grace **before** resting on Christ. We simply preach Him and His death to those broken-hearted. It is not for them to hold back till they “feel born again”. Let them flee at once for refuge (Heb. 6: 18). The broken heart is a sufficient warrant to “come”, and rest, not on the brokenness, but on **His** blood: and then such will learn afterwards more of the grace that sweetly drew them. But to the argumentative and self-confident person the need for a new birth must be preached, perhaps God will use this preaching to deter them from their presumptuous hope, with its miserable and final awakening.

Satan delights in presumption. He has sown “tares” amongst the “wheat” – very similar to the wheat. This is his special aim today. Many “rocky-ground hearers” merely think they are saved, and “foolish virgins” will labour on under the same delusion. Thousands believe in their believing, and trust to mental faith. But the head-knowledge of facts has never saved one soul. It would be unkind not to warn of the sham. The tree is known by its **fruits**, but Satan persuades many today: “Yes, I am saved”, **without** the fruits. And what if you are among them? To wake up in hell **unsaved** is an awful doom. What would you think, dear reader, if we were careless as to this? – None in hell will think that gospel preachers were too earnest.

If, therefore, we are born again, and the new life is a contrast with the old life as light is with darkness, there must be striking evidence in the fruit. Many ignore the **crisis** and the **after-effects** alike. But both are remarkable: salvation is to be **seen**: the Lord Jesus saves His people **from** their sins. Do not let any say they are born again because they “attend church”, or because they are outwardly “religious”. Is there a definite **spiritual** change, seen in love's obedience from the heart? If so, there has been the new birth. If not, the profession seems to be so empty. Ah, dear reader, would you wish us to say that we do not care if this is so? Would you not rather

welcome our concern, than indifference? In any case, we owe it to our Master to be faithful, and, we trust, with some love to souls, (O that it may increase a thousandfold!), we sound forth His precious message: "You must be born again".

Some, it may be, have glanced at these pages, and now think that the leaflet is finished. Stay one moment. Its work is only just begun. In the light of the holiness of God, in the light of eternity, in the light of the precious death of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the light of God's forbearance today, – yes, and in view of the brevity of life, and in view of the possibility of being deceived – shall we not ask ourselves, "Am I born again?" And again, "Is regeneration only a word to me, or a priceless reality?" The present-day tendency to call God "Father" is so delusive. But many are willing to be deceived. "Impertinence", say some, when spiritual matters are pressed home, but none speak thus who value their soul's welfare. Hence, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, let there be a bold but loving testimony as to the need; and will you not permit a definite question that refuses an indefinite answer – Have you a ground of unshaken assurance that you are now a child of God, and that a new birth has been your blessed experience? If so, thanks be unto God. Declare His love, and live gladly for Him, with His pleasures that differ from those of this poor and passing world. But if not, – it is infinitely better to be uncomfortable NOW than to find out, when there is no hope, "I have never been born again, and now it is **TOO LATE**".

The grace of God is so real, and His welcome is so tender. In earnest, loving concern would we remind of the urgency the Holy Spirit has shown in Scripture, and repeat the precious invitation:

"Come, for all things are now ready." (Luke 14: 17)
