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## The New Birth

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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*"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born anew" (John 3:3,7).*

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have eternal life... He that believes on Him is not judged; he that believes not has been judged already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16,18).*

"You must be born again" (or anew).

There are three reasons for speaking on that word to you. One, for the sake of anyone who needs to know what it is to be born anew or again; two, for the sake of those who do know what it is but who need continually to be reminded and to keep before them what the difference is between those who are born anew and those who are not; and three, because you are constantly moving amongst those who know nothing about it and are from time to time called upon to state or explain or testify to the difference that being born anew makes.

We are very often in the position which might, if we allowed it, bring us into some weakness on this matter. For instance, we meet many very nice and outwardly good people who are certainly not born again people and they compare very favourably outwardly with many whom we know who claim to be born again people. Sometimes the born again people do not compare very favourably

with many who are not born again and such a fact may weaken our position and raise questions in our minds and destroy the definiteness of our testimony, our confession.

Then sometimes, especially for younger people, the challenge as to what difference it really does make to be a Christian finds them unable to give a very direct and concrete answer. We find that we are led all round the globe in an attempt to explain things. It is not very often that you find a person, especially a young Christian, able to state precisely and concisely what it means to be a Christian or what it means to be born again. Now these are reasons for speaking to you on this matter - "You must be born again." I am going to be just as simple and as plain as I can and approach the subject along the line of three questions.

### **What it is to be Born Again**

Firstly, what is it to be born again? While that is a very big wide question which can be answered with a very great deal of material, we will confine it to one simple answer, for being born is, after all, a matter of blood, and you can gather a very great deal of the mystery which seems to surround the Bible teaching about blood into this one fact, that you cannot interchange blood with any vivifying, life-giving, health-giving value or prospect. You cannot change the blood of different species, that is, transfer the blood of one species to another. If you do, you not only reach deadlock, you do damage. You cannot pass animal blood into the human system with any real value - there is no such thing as a transfusion from a beast to a man. You never get anywhere by that means; it is to no purpose at all but rather does damage. Every species has its own blood and that blood is locked up to that species and must not be transferred to any other species. The blood in the Bible, as we know, is representative of the life and when it is said that in Jesus Christ, or through faith in Him, we will receive eternal life, that is only the effect of the symbolic language and sacrament of drinking His Blood. "Whoso drinks My blood has eternal life" (John 6:54), and that means that we are receiving the life of - may I use the word about the Lord Jesus? - a particular species. There is no species in existence in this universe like the Lord Jesus; He is a unique order of creation, an exclusive order of creation. He represents something which is not to be found anywhere else and being born anew is receiving the life of another order of creation of which He is the first and representative.

What is it then, to be born anew or again? It is to receive another and altogether other life, and the deep fact, truth, reality about a true born again child of God and about all such, is not in what they are naturally, outwardly. It is that, right deep down at the centre of their being there has been imparted something which is altogether different from what they are in themselves and altogether different from what all other people are. However good they may be naturally, the difference is there. You and I know quite well that in ourselves the difference is not complete and manifest, but we know that there is a fundamental difference, that there is that which makes the difference and it is a difference which is not in any way forced or strained but it is as natural as anything can be to this new creation. We know that something has happened in us that has made the difference between us and others and that basic fact is constantly making itself known in us. It is like a new kind of intelligence, a new kind of consciousness and conscience which is all the time discriminating, pointing out the differences, constraining or restraining something there that has happened. There is the difference and it is this other life of another order which is the order of God's Son which has made the difference, and to be born anew is that.

The difficulty with many Christians, not only with young Christians, but many others is that, under severe strain, pressure and trial and when this natural life is being provoked or strained for some

reason or other; perhaps by physical disorders and infirmities and weaknesses, perhaps by pressure from without. Under given conditions the natural life seems to be so strong still on the wrong side, on the evil side, and the old things of that natural life make themselves felt and assert themselves. Then we are tempted by the enemy to ask the question, Well, after all, what difference does it make to be a child of God? Is there anything really in this matter of being a new creation, of being born again? What is the difference?

The answer is deeper down, much deeper down, than our own natures. What we are naturally in ourselves remains, but there is a new creation. It is very important to get your emphasis upon the right word. When the apostle writes, "If any man be in Christ" (and our Authorized Version has failed us here when it says, "he is a new creature" or "a new creation"). The Revised helps us, but even then it does not underline the important word. It says, "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). You want to put under the word 'there' a thick black line. Where? *There*, in Christ; there is a new creation in Christ; and it is just there in Christ, where we are in Christ, what we are in Christ, when we are in Christ, not when we are in ourselves, but when we are in Christ. It is *there* that there is a new creation. It is what is in Christ that is the new creation.

We will not stay with that further, but I want you to realize that there is a difference and that difference we know. It is that difference which has become evermore real to us as the mark of our spiritual growth, the difference between what Christ is and what we are and what man is as a whole by nature, the difference, because we have received (to use the symbolic word) a new blood, a different blood, or, to use the proper word, the actual word: another life, a different life. What is it to be born again? It is that.

### **Why We Must Be Born Again**

Why must we be born again? Why was the Lord Jesus so emphatic? Note this double imperative - Verily, verily; truly, truly, I say unto you... Why? Well, the answer, I think, is found in the complete statement. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now, there is no reference to the Kingdom of God in the context, therefore one of two things must be taken account of. One, that Nicodemus and the people whom he represented needed no explanation as to the fact of the Kingdom of God. That is, it was no mystery, it could be taken for granted that they knew about the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus knew something about the Kingdom of God. It was not introducing a strange subject so far as he was concerned. But, whether the Kingdom of God is a new idea or not, the point is this - the Lord Jesus assumes without any explanations at all, without stopping and saying, Now look here, there is such a thing as the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God is so-and-so - giving a long explanation of the Kingdom of God. No, He assumes that the Kingdom of God is the thing which matters, is the thing which counts, is the ultimate and the supreme thing, and His attitude is simply this - Look here, Nicodemus, ultimately, eventually, pre-eminently, the Kingdom of God is the thing in view; the time is coming when there will be no other kingdom but the Kingdom of God. All other kingdoms will have been met, judged, destroyed, blotted out, and this universe will be the Kingdom of God! So the thing that matters is whether we are going to be in or out. There will not be an alternative to the Kingdom of God. We will either be in the Kingdom of God or we will be out: "...should not perish, but have eternal life". Perish means to go out of what God is going to bring about, to be outside of what God is going to institute, to miss it, to be out of it, to have lost it, to be judged unworthy of it.

The thing which matters, then, is the Kingdom of God, for it will be that which will be all pervading and all-inclusive at last. That is why we must be born anew, because to get into that Kingdom is no mechanical matter. It is a matter of birth, it is a matter of nature. That Kingdom will be constituted by a God-nature, the nature of God imparted to all His subjects and all the citizens of that Kingdom. It will be a matter of constitution. The difference is to perish being outside, and to have eternal life being inside, and you only get this life through birth.

So then, if the Kingdom is the thing which eventually and ultimately matters, then that is why we must be born anew, and there is no getting into the thing which matters other than by new birth, that is all. So you simply say, when you are challenged - What does it mean to be born anew, to be a Christian? It means to have received another life more inward and deeper down than the life of nature and which is gaining ground, steadily gaining ground and making differences, and that is why I do not do certain things that you do. It is not that I have decided that I shall not do these things, that I have drawn up a list of things which I should do and should not do, can do or cannot do, ought to do and ought not to do. It is simply that there has taken place in me something which has made these differences and I am following the law of another life which is at work within, and it is no merely legalistic thing at all. That is the difference, that is what it means to be born again and why we must be born again. In the end there is only going to be one Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, and you get into that Kingdom by being born anew. You are either going to be out or in and if you are going to be in, you must be born anew.

### **How We Are Born Again**

Then how are we born again? What do we have to do to be born again? Well, in the first place, it is by acknowledging the fact of our sinful nature. No, it is not an acknowledging that we have done some wrong things, that we have committed sins - that is not good enough. A lot of people think that if you are going to become a Christian, it is a matter of confessing that you have done this, or that, or the other which is not right, and asking God to forgive and saying you will not do it again. That is not it. It is not *sins* but *sin*, it is not what we do or do not do, it is what we are. And no one ever gets through with God by acknowledging a certain number of sins even though they might make a mountain of them that is a countless number that they would confess. That is not the way through with God, because God knows a great deal more than we can count about ourselves. What He calls for is acknowledgment of the fact of a sinful nature, what we are in ourselves, and then, in the light of that, the acknowledgment of Christ as God's Son.

There is a very important matter bound up with that. You expected me to say, the acknowledgment of Christ as Saviour, and I did not say it; the acknowledgment of Christ as God's Son. You look at the New Testament; that is what men have to acknowledge from Pentecost onward, that Jesus is the Son of God. Why? Son implies something, it implies a father and it implies a begotten one, and that brings you immediately into touch with this very fact of the begetting of a family relationship, of getting into a family. The door into that family is the Lord Jesus, the Firstborn. He is the way in and so you have got to acknowledge Him, not as a great prophet, a great teacher, a good man, the best that ever lived, but you have got to acknowledge that unique relationship, that we are not all the children of God in that same way by nature. There is no such thing, in the essential sense, as the universal Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. That is all nonsense and rubbish, it does not get you anywhere. This Fatherhood is a peculiar Fatherhood, this sonship of Jesus Christ is unique sonship, and this is an inclusive family relationship and there is only one way and that is through Him in that position as Son.

Oh, Satan knows quite well all about that. Probably there is nothing through history that Satan has laid himself out to do more thoroughly than to deny that essential sonship of Jesus Christ. The one thing at which he has aimed his blows and all his cunning, skillful attention through the ages has been at the sonship of Jesus Christ in its utterness, in its exclusiveness, in its uniqueness. All the false doctrines of history have had that somewhere lurking in them. So the acknowledgment of Jesus as God's Son for our salvation is the way of new birth.

And then a definite act of committal and acceptance by faith. I am not one who commits so many sins or sins of this kind or that, but I am a sinner by nature. Jesus Christ is God's Son of another order. I, by a definite act of committal and acceptance, take a faith relationship with Christ to bring me into that family which is another, altogether other kind of family!

Now, can you grasp that? What is it to be born again? Will you answer that simply? Why must we be born again? How are we born again? Well, if anyone here does not know what it means to be born again, that is it very briefly. You know the way now. If any of you have had difficulties over this matter of the difference between very nice, good people who make no profession at all of Christianity and Christians whom you feel let down the whole thing, or because of what you still find in yourself. You wonder, 'Does it make so much difference after all, what really is the difference; it does not seem to me that those who are Christians even come up to the level of many who are not! What is the difference, what does it mean?' There is an answer and a very real answer. I have not given all the facts, but there is a real answer. And why? Well, there is no reason for anything more imperative than that we should be born again because the Kingdom of God is the thing that is going to govern everything. Whether we are in the Kingdom of God or not is the most important matter that ever anybody could have to face.

Well then, if it is true, and if I am persuaded or anyone is persuaded that it is something to consider seriously, what about it, how is it done, what is the way? Can you give that answer? Have you all come that way? May the Lord just use this very simple word for our confirmation, clarifying and new joy.