

Primitive Preacher by Elder Grigg Thompson
THE SECOND BIRTH

“Marvel not that I said unto thee. Ye must be born again;” [Joh 3:7](#).

There are many things spoken by the Savior to his disciples, and written by the apostles in their epistles to the churches, that apply to Christians, and to Christians only. In explaining scriptures it is important that we should notice to whom the address is made, and apply the instructions and comforts to such characters or persons as the speaker or writer was addressing. To take the invitations, promises, and encouragements addressed to awakened sinners, mourning and seeking souls, and apply them indiscriminately to all men, is a perversion of the word, and giving the children’s bread to dogs. But there are scriptures that have a universal application to all the sons and daughters of Adam, and we should labor to enforce their solemn truths upon the minds of all. My text belongs to this class of Scripture, and teaches a great truth applicable to every man and woman belonging to the human family, be they great or small, rich or poor, learned or unlearned. If they are born of Christian parents, reared up under religious instruction, trained up in the Sabbath-school, and human skill exerted upon them to form the religious character, however good the character may be, and how ever much and closely the forms of religion may be observed, the truth of my text still stands in all its solemn force: “Ye must be born again.”

The man to whom the Savior addressed this language was a ruler among the Jews, and of the Pharisees, a religious sect among the Jews, who were very strict in their religion, and he, being a ruler among the Jews, was, doubtless, taught in all their religion. His religious training and character had not prepared him for the kingdom of God, hence Jesus said to him, “Ye must be born again.” Our children are gifts to us from the Lord, and it is our duty to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to train them up in the way they should go. It is doubtless true that parents can do much in forming the moral character of their children, and I fear that there is often a criminal neglect on their part in rearing and educating them. The most lasting impressions written upon our minds, and those that have the most influence over us through life, are those received in childhood and youth. In a large majority of cases the character that follows us through life is formed around the hearthstone of the parental house. The example and teaching of the father and mother, and the associations they select for their children, have much to do in molding the character of the child, which will follow it through life. I often hear parents say, “I can not talk to my children,” and I wonder why it is so. If they live before them as they ought, and set that religious and moral

example that is worthy of imitation, why should it be a task to them to talk to their children, and give them parental advice and instruction?

Visit the man whose head is frosted by time, and who is just ready to fall into the grave, whose character is unstained by dissipation and crime, and ask him to whom, of all earthly beings, he is most indebted for the moral principles which have governed him through life, and saved him from disgrace and shame, and in a large majority of cases the answer will be, "My mother." Dear friends, while I am talking many of you can call to mind the prayers, the advice, the kisses, and the tears of a mother, whose body now rests in the cold grave, and can see the controlling influence they have had upon you through life, and feel to bless God that you had a good, pious mother, who was not ashamed to pray with her children, to talk to them, and if a tear started in their eyes to kiss it away with her soft lips. Many of us have had such a mother, and we often visit the little mound of earth that covers her from our sight, and read the name upon the little monument that points out her resting place, and drop a shower of warm tears upon the dust that covers her, in grateful remembrance of the best earthly friend we, ever had.

I verily believe that mothers can do more to mold the morals and form the character of the child than the father can. It is on her lap we receive our first ideas, and she breathes into us her own nature and character. There is a responsibility resting upon a mother that I fear is not always fully realized by mothers. Fathers have their responsibilities, for they are every day of their lives, in their deportment and conversation, writing on the minds of their children moral sentiments that are to follow them through life. Some of us will never forget the prayers of our father, and the deep impression made upon our minds, as we saw him when rising from his knees wipe the dropping tears from his eyes. He had been praying for his children, and that God might give him grace and wisdom to live before them as a father should live before his children. Those prayers were not breath spent in vain, for they have followed us through all our after life, and have often come up before us as a warning voice when we were tempted to depart from the paths of virtue, truth, or honor. I would, today, and at all times, use all the arguments I am master of to encourage parents to be untiring in their efforts to bring their children up in the way they should go when old, and they will feel themselves abundantly paid for all their labor, when in age they are surrounded with a family respected by all the good, and in their moral life, and high standing in society, reflecting honor on the parents who reared them. The influence that education has upon the life and actions of men has long been understood, and over fifty years ago, Dr. Ely, in urging upon his denomination, (the

Presbyterians,) the necessity of establishing colleges and schools in the Mississippi valley, said, "Give me the control of the schools in the United States, and I will soon control the ballot-box and the pulpit of the nation." If this be true, how important that we should educate our children right, and, as far as possible, keep their minds free from all errors, either in religion or politics. Religious sentiments imbibed in youth, and received from the lips of parents, are hard to throw off, and are apt to stick by us as long as we live. But when we have given our children all the religious and moral culture in our power, and have done all we can to form their religious and moral character, and to prepare them for usefulness in society, we must not forget to impress upon their minds that all this will not make Christians of them; that human culture and human instrumentality can never prepare the to see or enter into the kingdom of God. To be made a citizen of that kingdom, and enter into its enjoyments, a man must be born again. He must be resurrected from his death in sin, and be made a new creature in Christ Jesus. When Jesus announced this doctrine to Nicodemus, notwithstanding his religious education, being learned in the law and the prophets, he was astonished and made to marvel and wonder at the teaching of the Savior. It looked to him unreasonable, and contrary to the laws of nature, -an impossibility; and when the religious Pharisee expressed his wonder at the unreasonable doctrine, Jesus simply repeated the declaration by saying, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

In the discussion of this subject I shall pursue the following order:

1st, Who it is that must be born again;

2nd, The necessity of the second birth, and the nature of that birth;

3^d, The agent or power by which the birth is effected;

4th, The kingdom into which it brings us, and some of the blessings connected with it.

1st, **Who it is that must be born again.** It looks like there could be no difference of opinion on this point, for Nicodemus was the man addressed, and evidently the man that must be born again. If it were some spiritual existence, a heavenly man, or a quickened spirit that had to be born a second time, Jesus would certainly have so told Nicodemus. But Jesus says, "Ye, the man I am talking to, the fallen sinner of Adam's race, ye must be born again." And Nicodemus evidently so understood Jesus, for he said, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" If it were a heavenly man, a quickened spirit, or the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, as taught by some, that has to be born again, Christ would certainly so have taught Nicodemus, and would have said, "Nicodemus, you misunderstand me. I do not mean that you, the fallen

sinner, the son of Adam, must be born again. That would be working over old materials; that would be making a new hat out of an old one. It is not the Adam sinner in soul, body, mind, or spirit, that has to be born again, but it is a heavenly man, a quickened spirit, that was created such in me before the world began.” But the Savior intimated no such thing, for it was Nicodemus to whom he was talking, and Nicodemus, the Pharisee, he meant. If not so, why should he say to Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again?” If it were a heavenly man, a quickened spirit that was no part of Nicodemus that must be born again, why tell Nicodemus about it? He could not be bettered or worsted by the second birth, and could not enter the kingdom of God, for he who enters that kingdom must be born again-born of the Spirit. If it were a spiritual seed that was created in Christ before the world was created, and lay dormant in his loins until it is quickened and born, it is not a second birth, and there is no change of nature or character experienced by the seed in this birth. It was spiritual before; it is only spiritual now. It was incorruptible before, and is incorruptible now. The birth has effected no change in its nature or spiritual condition. But if it be the sinner that must be born again, or from above, then the sinner must experience a change to enable him to see the kingdom of God, and without that change he cannot enter into it.

Paul to the Ephesians says, “And you **hath he quickened**, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” This clearly teaches that it is the sinner dead in sin that is quickened and made alive in the new birth, or regeneration. That seed talked of, that lay dormant in Christ, could not have been dead in sin, for, “He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” He was “without sin,” “knew no sin,” and could not have a sinful seed lying dormant in his loins. The Ephesians to whom Paul wrote were men and women who had once been dead in sin, without hope, and without God in the world. But Paul believed there had been a great change wrought in them by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, for he says, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” It is evidently, then, the sinner that is quickened; that is made alive; that is born a second time. The Colossian saints were taught that it was God, “who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated **us** into the kingdom of his dear Son.” These saints were men and women who had once been slaves under the power of darkness, but had been delivered from that bondage, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. This was a great change in their condition, and they were brought into a kingdom that Christ says no man can enter without being born again. Peter, in writing to the saints who had purified their souls in obeying the truth

through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, exhorts them to love one another with pure hearts fervently, “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, “This simply teaches that the first birth was of a corruptible seed, and brought us into this natural world, fallen sinners, with corrupt propensities, sinful desires, and lusts. But the second birth is of an incorruptible seed. It is by the quickening power and regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit that we are born the second time. Can any one read the letter of St. Peter and doubt that it was the same person who was once born of a corruptible seed that was born again, or a second time, of an incorruptible seed? The whole Scriptures go to establish this truth. The object of Christ’s mission into this world was to “save his people from their sins.” It was sinners, and not a holy, sinless, spiritual seed, that he came to save. “It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Apply this subject to any class of beings other than lost and ruined sinners, and you strip the gospel of all its comforts, and there is nothing in it adapted to the wants and necessities of lost and ruined sinners. It is not the life that is born again, but it is the child, the sinner, that receives a new life, is quickened into a new being, becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. The life is not the child, but is that which gives sensibilities, feelings, thirsts, and desires to the child. Jesus said of his sheep, “I give unto them eternal life.” The life given was not the sheep, but it was that which gave action and sensibilities to the sheep, and made them a living flock; and it is when spiritual life is given to the sinner that he is quickened into spiritual sensibilities, and spiritual thirsts and desires are begotten in the soul. This life is in Christ, and he gives it to the sinner, and by its quickening, regenerating, and resurrecting power the sinner is born a second time, resurrected from his death in sin, and holy desires, spiritual appetites, and thirstings are begotten in his soul. With this view the doctrine becomes an interesting one, and applies to me, and to you, and to every other sinner. O, that this solemn truth may ever be before our eyes, and in our hearts: “The sinner must be born again or sink to endless woe.”

2nd, The necessity of the second birth, and the nature of that birth. If the thing to be born again were a spiritual existence, the second birth would not change its nature, or qualify it for any higher enjoyments than it was qualified for in its creation, and there would be no necessity for the second birth. If man were spiritual in his creation, there could be no need of a second birth to prepare him for spiritual enjoyments, but the first man was not spiritual, but natural, and just qualified to enjoy the natural blessings with which God surrounded him. To enjoy any higher state than this he must be born a second time-born

of the Spirit. A holy, sinless, spiritual man is, in every respect, prepared for the kingdom of God without any change in his nature or condition. If it be true, as affirmed by some, "That none will ever go to heaven, but those that came down from heaven, and that there will not be one more in heaven when time is wound up, and the ransomed host put in possession of the spiritual land, than existed there before time," then the new birth is a farce, a useless nothing. All that once lived in heaven are qualified in their nature and spirituality for that place, and can never need a new life and change of nature to prepare them for it. If spiritual beings have fallen from their spiritual estate, and lost their spiritual life and holiness, all that is necessary is to reinstate them. This would not be a second birth, regeneration, or a new creation, but a reinstating, or putting them back into their original state. It is affirmed by some that, "It is not true that the elect, as such, were created in Adam, but the elect of God, as such, were created in Christ Jesus, and existed in him before the natural creation took place." If they were created in him, and existed in him, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones, they were created before Adam, (for he was created in the natural creation,) were no part of his seed, and could never be involved in his transgression, or inherit his corrupt nature. If Christ, the head of the body, was spiritual, all the members that composed his body, his flesh, and his bones, were spiritual, quickened into life when the head was, and as holy, spiritual, and pure as the head. This holy, spiritual man needs no second birth, regeneration, or new creation to prepare him for holy and spiritual enjoyments. But it is again affirmed by these teachers that, "Christ, as the seminal head of his own church, or body, dwelt in the bosom of the Father, was the begotten, and the only begotten of the Father, and the begetting and setting up of the head was the begetting and setting up of the body of which he is the head and life. And when the head was put to death in the flesh the life of the body, or church, was taken away, and all her members were dead so long as he remained in the grave; but when he was raised up, together with his dead body did all his members rise from death, and were quickened together with him."

This, to me, is strange philosophy, for it makes Christ, the only begotten Son of God, a created being, and as such he could not claim equality with the Father, for he was only his creature; and if true, Christ is convicted of error, for he says, "I and the Father are one." It also teaches that the begetting and setting up of Christ, the head of the church, or body, was the begetting and setting up of that body of whom he is the life and head, and that his church is his flesh and bones, and were all quickened into life when he was. It is a body of flesh and bones that was created and set up before the **natural creation**, and

it was in this body he was put to death; this body that existed before the **natural creation**, which was his church, the body of which he was the head and life. This body of flesh, is what he is put to death in, and this body is his church, his flesh, and his bones, and when his life is taken, the life of his body is taken, and all die together, are buried together, and are dead so long as he remains in the grave. Now this is a mystifying, mixing up, and tangling of things, so that I cannot understand them, or see any consistency in them; but I can see that they palpably contradict the teachings of the Bible. Christ says, "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep;" [Joh 10:15](#). Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;" [Eph 5:25](#). Again Paul says to the church at Ephesus, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood;" [Ac 20:28](#). Now this is the church, his body, his flesh, and his bones, that were created when he was created, begotten when he was begotten, that he was put to death in, and that died when he died, lay in the grave with him, and was quickened and raised up together with him, that Paul says he died for, or in the room and stead of. One or the other is wrong. Their language can never be reconciled, and I believe Paul, the old Primitive preacher, was right. But it is said, "But when he was raised up, together with his dead body, did all his members rise from death?" Then so far as the church, the elect of God, is concerned, the resurrection is past. This is the very error of Hymeneus and Philetus, who, Paul says, "Concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some;" [2Ti 2:18](#). But Paul comes up again and squarely contradicts this teaching, and tells us that the church, or elect, or saints, did not rise from the dead when Christ rose, for he says, "Christ, the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming;" [1Co 15:23](#). Here it is positively affirmed that the resurrection of those that are Christ's will be at his coming; that Christ is now risen, the first-fruits, and at his coming all that are his, the whole crop, shall be raised from the dead, and gathered into the heavenly kingdom. Thus Paul, in about the year 59, warned us against this error, and so have the Primitive Baptists in all ages since, and thus they preach and affirm today.

This doctrine destroys the necessity of a second birth, or regeneration, or a new creation, for it was created spiritual and holy, in its flesh and its bones, its head and life, and could be no part of Adam or his family, and could not sin in him, or inherit his fallen, corrupt nature. Adam was not spiritual, but natural, was created in the natural creation, and was of the earth, earthy. He was not prepared for spiritual and immortal enjoyments in his best estate, much less after he had sinned and fallen under the curse of God's holy law, and

condemnation had passed upon him, and all his posterity. If this spiritual race ever fell from their state of holiness and purity, they fell head and all together, and the head was as much involved and as guilty as the members, and, in fact, if the head, like the head of your body or mine, controlled the members in all their actions, he was the guilty one, and the members were only the innocent instruments to do his wicked bidding. This rule prevails in all our courts; for a man is not guilty of murder, in the eye of the law, who kills his fellow by accident, without any forethought, design, or intention to hurt the man. In the head the wicked design or purpose is made, and the members of the body act in obedience to its command. The sin is the head's and not the members', for they had no power to resist the command of the head. This is a proposition too plain to need any argument, and will show that the Head, (Christ,) as represented in this theory, is the guilty one, and had to die for His own guilt, and his members, his church, his flesh, and his bones had to die because they were in vital union with him, and had no power to resist his will, or what he determined and moved them to do. This is not our High Priest, our Redeemer, whose blood cleanseth from sin. And our model preacher, Paul, tells us that such an high priest is no better than the priests under the law, who could make nothing perfect, nor put away sin by any of their offerings; but of our Priest he says, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," and that this High Priest is the Son of God, "who is consecrated for evermore." "He knew no sin," but it pleased the Lord to lay our sins on him, and he bore them in his own body on the tree, and put them away by the sacrifice of himself. He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. Whether Hymeneus and Philetus belonged to the old school or new school I cannot tell, but our Primitive preacher warned us against their errors, and the Primitive Baptists of all ages have denounced them as heresies.

Human goodness can never prepare a man for heaven. If we could be placed back again in the garden, with all the goodness Adam possessed before he fell, we would not be prepared for spiritual enjoyments, for we would be nothing but natural men, and the "natural man can not know the things of the Spirit." This clearly proves that spiritual life must be given him, and spiritual sensibilities, desires, and affections begotten within him before he can know and enjoy the things of the Spirit. Christ says, "I give unto them eternal life." Did he give them something they always possessed? Surely not. But our Primitive preacher says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and so preach the Primitive Baptists today. Christ says to his Father, "As thou hast given him," the Son,

“power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” This proves that, although they were his by the gift of the Father, they had not eternal life until Christ gave it to them. John, another one of our Primitive preachers, says, “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, **even eternal life.” And again, “And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life.” This life is given the sinner, dead in sins, when God quickens him, and raises him up out of that state of death, and by his divine power makes him partaker of the divine nature, and circumcises his heart to love the Lord God. In this work the sinner is put in possession of a life he never had before.**

Man in his natural state is a sinner, dead in sins. The love of God is not in his heart, and the fear of God is not before his eyes. He must, therefore, be changed in nature and affections to prepare him to see and enter into the kingdom of God; for without holiness no man can see God.

If we consider how sinful and corrupt man is in his fallen nature, his mind blinded by the god of this world so that spiritual things are foolishness to him, and he can not know them; and what God is, the place where God’s throne is, and where no unclean thing can enter, it will appear clear in the very nature of things that the man must be born again, for it would be simply impossible for him to be happy in heaven if he were not holy. God is perfect in holiness; all things relating to true religion are holy and spiritual: but man by nature is unholy, and cannot relish or even discern that excellency. God and the nature of holiness and happiness are unchangeable; then man must be changed or he never can be conformed to them, or be happy in them. It is therefore man, the fallen sinner that must be born again, and changed in the affections of his soul, from hatred to love. Love is one of the fruits of the Spirit of God, begotten in the soul of the sinner born of that Spirit and an evidence by which we may know that we are born of God, for, “He that loveth is born of God.”

Man is natural in his creation, and by transgression has become corrupt and sinful. He cannot therefore see or know spiritual things, for he is natural; and he cannot enter into the holy communion with God, for he is corrupt and sinful. He must therefore be born of the Spirit to see the spiritual kingdom, and be cleansed from sin to enter into its holy and spiritual enjoyments.

It is therefore the sinner, the son or daughter of Adam that is born again, and the birth is a spiritual birth. The soul or spirit is quickened into life, raised from a death in sin, cleansed from sin by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The Savior says, “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” It is the spirit of the man that is born of the Spirit, and not the Spirit

of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, for that would be the Spirit being born of itself. Paul says, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." It is therefore clear that it is not the flesh or natural body that is quickened and made spiritual, for Paul was here talking to Christians, who had been born of the Spirit, and telling them that the body is dead because of sin; hence we are not debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh, for the flesh is still dead in sin; and it is fleshly lusts that war against the renewed, quickened, or regenerated soul.

The fallen, corrupt, and sinful state of the natural man, incapable of knowing or entering into the enjoyment of spiritual things, shows the necessity of the new birth, and that it should be a spiritual birth, and by it be prepared to enter into spiritual and holy comforts. The first birth is of the flesh and of man, but the second birth is thus described, [Joh 1:12-13](#); "But as many as received him, to them gave he power," (or the right or privilege,)" to become the sons of God, **even** to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Hence, man has nothing to do, directly or indirectly, in bringing about this birth. It is of God; and in this birth the sinner is made partaker of the divine nature, and enters into the enjoyments of the spiritual kingdom, which no human instrumentalities, or human education, or training can fit him for without this birth. *This birth is a soul work, and is effected by the power of God in the soul of the poor, fallen, and ruined sinner of Adam's race. It is not a mere change of action and nothing more, but the heart, the affections, the desires of the soul, are so changed that they love the things they once hated, and hate the things they once loved. The change is so great that it is called in Scripture the taking away the stony heart out of their flesh, and giving them a heart of flesh. The regenerated sinner is called a new creature in Christ Jesus. Many figures are used in the sacred word to illustrate this change. In my text it is called a birth; it is called a quickening in [Eph 2:5](#); in [Col 1:13](#), it is called a translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son; and in [Col 3:1](#), it is called a resurrection; and also in [Joh 5:25](#). In these, and all other places where this change is spoken of, it is the sinner dead in sin that has to experience it, and then it is more than a mere change of actions; it is a change of spiritual condition, of having passed from death unto life. The change is so great that none who have ever felt it can be made to doubt or question the truth of it. You might 'just as well try to convince the blind man who was born blind, that no change had been effected upon him when he had received the power of

sight. The change in the sinner is just as great spiritually when he is quickened into spiritual life, as was the change naturally in Lazarus when he was raised from the dead and restored to his sisters. The dear saint who has felt this change may often have his fears whether it is the right change or not. He may often adopt the language of the poet,

I am a stranger here below,
And what I am 'tis hard to know,
I am so vile, so prone to sin,
I fear that I'm not born again.

But ask that soul in its darkest moment if it has ever felt a change? If it loves sin as well as it ever did? and it will answer without a moment's hesitation, "O, I hate the things that I once loved; I now see sin as I never saw it before. I know I have felt a change, but I fear it is not of the Lord, for if it was:"

' Why am I thus,
Why this cold and lifeless frame,
Hardly sure can they be worse,
Who have never known his name.'

Every tear, every groan, and every pain felt in our heart on account of our sins and our unworthiness of God is an evidence of this change. We all once viewed Jesus as a root out of dry ground, without form and comeliness, or any thing in him that we should love him. We esteemed him not, and tried to cast him away from us, and shunned the society of the saints. But now Christ is all to us; let him hide his face and it is mid night with our soul; darkness and gloom is all around us, and our harps are on the willows. But let Jesus appear, and my dawning is begun. His presence and smiles drive darkness from my mind, bind up my broken heart, heal all its wounds, calm all its fears, give me back my harp, strung and tuned, to sound his praise. Can it be that any who have felt Jesus thus precious to them have had the scales to fall off their eyes, and the spirit of their mind renewed, and then say, "I have never felt any change, I love sin as well as I ever did?" No, the dear child of God who has felt this change will say, "I hate sin and abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes on account of it." Christ has made the test and fixed the stake that can never be removed, when he said, "Except a man be born again, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." And can you, dear Christian, fellowship the man as a Christian, and invite him into your pulpit, who denies this change, and will stand up in the sacred desk and say, "My heart has never been changed; I love sin as well as I ever did." As Baptists, we want you to decide, and let the world know that this is not the doctrine of our church.

3d. The agent, or power, by which the birth is effected. This birth, being a spiritual, heavenly birth, is of God, and not of the flesh, or the will of man. In nature we never willed our own birth, nor had any hand in bringing it about, and the very nature and condition of the sinner shows conclusively that he could never will or do any thing to bring about the second birth. The dead can never resurrect themselves, neither can their friends give them life. It takes the power of God to raise the dead. A death in sin is the absence of spiritual life, and all power to beget such a life. In this condition the sinner is beyond the reach of instrumentalities, however good and powerful they may be, to relieve the pain, and give comfort to the afflicted. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to the believer. But none are believers but such as are born of God and are in possession of spiritual life, for Jesus says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life;” [Joh 5:25](#). Faith is an evidence of life and of this second birth, and can not exist where it has not taken place. Faith is not a means, or agent, through or by which this birth is ‘effected, but is an evidence or fruit of this birth; for it is said, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” Words and arguments, or a preached gospel, can never give life to the sinner, dead in sin, or produce faith in his heart; for it is said, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know **them**, because they are spiritually discerned.” If words and arguments, or preaching the gospel, could produce this change in the sinner, it would be of man, and no nature but what man possesses would be imparted. But it is of God, and in it the sinner is made partaker of the divine nature, is quickened into spiritual life by the Spirit of God; for it is said, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” It is therefore the Spirit of God entering the heart of the sinner that quickens him into a new life, resurrects him from a death in sin, and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus; and faith and love are the evidences of this work, “for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” The great mistake of the world is, that they teach that faith is a condition by which we obtain salvation and sonship; while the Bible teaches that it is a fruit of the Spirit, and an evidence of the gracious condition of those who possess this gift of God and fruit of his Spirit.

But some will object to this, and say “The gospel is the means the Spirit uses in quickening the sinner, for Paul says, ‘For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.’ So it is through the hearing of the gospel that the Spirit reaches the heart of

the sinner.” But, we answer, the text does not say that the power comes in the gospel, or that the Holy Ghost comes in the gospel, but that the gospel comes in them. We seldom hear a new born soul relate his experience but that he will refer to some time when he heard the gospel as he never heard it before, and he was made to tremble and weep, while those who sat right by him, and were hearing the same words, felt no such emotions. Why this difference in the two hearers? and why does this trembling soul now hear as he never heard before, and feel as he never felt before under the preaching of the gospel? It is because there is a Spirit and power in him that was never there before, that has opened the ears to hear and prepared the heart to understand the word preached. Having this power in him the gospel comes as it never did before, and awakens in him reflections and feelings he never had before under its sound. It makes no difference how fearful or how joyful a message may be, it will have no power to move those who cannot understand or hear it. But let the power to hear and understand be given, and then the effects of the message will be visible in those who hear. It is therefore the quickened sinner who trembles at the word of the Lord, and by it is instructed in the way of salvation.

But the objector to our views will say, “Jesus has taught us in the parable of the sower and the seed, that we should sow the seed broadcast, and it, falling into the human heart, brings forth a crop of holy fruits, such as faith, love, and obedience to the laws of Christ, and is the means of re-begetting, or regenerating the soul.” But we answer that the seed has no power to prepare or fertilize the soil. If it falls on stony ground, or among thorns and thistles, it cannot prepare the ground for its reception, and will perish because it cannot prepare and fertilize the soil. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God must give the increase, or prepare and fertilize the soil that the seed may grow and bring forth fruit, as he did the heart of Lydia that she should hear and obey the words of his servant. No sensible husbandman sows his seed in unprepared ground, expecting the seed to prepare the ground and bring him a crop. We are not the husbandman, and cannot prepare the human heart for the reception of the word; but it is our duty to sow the seed broadcast, for we know not what heart the Lord has prepared for its reception. We are to sow the seed in the morning, and to withhold not in the evening, for we know not which is to prosper, or whether both alike is to be good. We are not of that people who were never called to preach to sinners. The command we have received from our King is, “Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” But we are nowhere commanded to prepare their hearts to receive it, but he that can prepare their hearts has promised to be with us

always. With this promise, we go sowing the seed, and leaving the event with him who can prepare the heart for its reception, and fertilize it so that a crop can be produced, to his honor and glory.

The last, and perhaps thought to be the most conclusive proof brought against us on this subject by our opposers is found in Romans, tenth chapter. ([Ro 10](#)) It is contended that there our views are fairly met and squarely negated. With a great show of triumph they will quote the text, “So, then, faith **cometh** by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” That it is by hearing the word spoken by the preacher that faith is begotten in the heart of the sinner dead in sin, and he, through this instrumentality, is made a believer in Christ, and fitted for his kingdom.

We will now examine this text and its connection, and if all prejudice is laid aside, and we look at it calmly and rationally, I think all will see that it is one of the clear proofs of our position. If you will read the epistle to the Romans, you will find that a large portion of it is in dialogue form; first, the epistle affirms the truth and then states the Jew’s objection to it to illustrate, it is said, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” This is evidently an objection brought against Paul’s doctrine by the unbelieving Jew, and Paul responds, “God forbid; how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” Again, the same objector would say, “What advantage then hath the law? or what profit is **there** in circumcision?” And Paul responds, “Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” You will find in a number of other places Paul states the objection of the unbelieving Jew to his doctrine and answers the objection, and the text under consideration is one of these objections brought by the unbelieving Jew, stated and replied to by Paul. If you will look at the connection you will see that the apostle has been showing the difference between the law and faith; that the law belongs to this life, and only bestows temporal blessings; that. “Moses describeth the righteousness, which is of the law; that the man which doeth those things shall live by them.” “But the righteousness which is by faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from **above**;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)” Faith is a fruit of the Spirit, and all who have it in their hearts believe that God has raised up Christ from the dead, and that he is our peace, who hath made both one, who hath broken down the middle wall of partition **between us**, that there is now no difference between the Jew and the Greek, but that all that have this faith have access to God through Christ, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

To this the Jews would object, for they believed that there was a difference between the Jew and the Greek, or Gentiles, and that faith was the fruit of human arguments and teaching brought to bear on the natural intellect or mind of man, and without this knowledge was imparted by man, they could never believe or call on God. They had no idea that this was a lesson that none but God could teach. Paul knew this, and in the 14th and 15th verses [Ro 10:14-15](#) he gives us the Jew's objection in as strong terms as the Jew could give them, and here they are. "How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things?"

This objection Paul answers by saying, "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" Faith will beget obedience, and Paul lets the objectors know that they had not obeyed, and that their disobedience was an evidence of their unbelief, as Esaias saith, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" The same prophet that the Jew quotes to sustain his position, shows that he is wrong; that faith does not come by the report or the preaching of the gospel, or all that heard it would believe. But the Jew responds, "So, then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The argument is, that there is no way for faith to come, but by words and arguments addressed to the rational man. It is the fruit of testimony, or evidence, and all the way that evidence can be brought to the mind is by words and arguments; but Paul answers firmly and positively, "But I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth; and their words unto the ends of the world." They have heard the gospel; it has been preached; "Their sound went into all the earth; and their words unto the ends of the world," and unbelief and infidelity still remains, and will remain until **the arm of the Lord is revealed**. For faith is not the fruit of words and arguments, but is the fruit of God's Spirit, and is begotten in the heart by the **operation of God**, and is produced by the **same power that raised up our Lord from the dead**.

But the Jew will contend, as all natural men do, that this doctrine will never do. There is no way to get faith, but by words and arguments. Any other position is foolishness and nonsense in the extreme, and it is preposterous to say that Israel is in unbelief. For says the Jew, "But I say did not Israel know?" Israel is not in ignorance. She has been taught, she has been instructed. To charge Israel with unbelief is unjust and false. But Paul is not defeated or driven from his position, but will meet them with Moses, by whom

the law was given, and says, “First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by **them that are no** people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not. I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hand unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” Words and arguments with the Jews have failed, for they have Moses and the prophets and the law, with the priests, their offerings and typical service; they have had the preaching of John the Baptist, Christ, and the apostles; they have witnessed the miracles and the mighty works that Jesus did among them, and they are still in unbelief, and are a disobedient and gainsaying people, and have persecuted and put to death the very men that came preaching the gospel of peace to them. It takes more than words and arguments to subdue the enmity and hatred of the carnal heart, and to give spiritual life and sensibilities to the natural man, the man dead in sin. This Paul knew by experience, for he had heard them preach the gospel of peace. He had heard the eloquent and unanswerable appeal made by the dying Stephen, but words and arguments could not move him, and make a believer of him, until God revealed his arm, and by his mighty power subdued the hatred and murderous feelings of his heart, and revealed Christ in him and to him, and Paul would testify that it is “By the grace of God I am what I am.” For if God’s grace and almighty power had not interposed in his case, and changed the enmity, and hatred, and murderous feelings of his heart, he never would have been any thing else but a bloodthirsty persecutor of Christ and his people. Paul’s case is not an exception. All the sons and daughters of Adam have the same heart of hatred, and mind of enmity against God, are led by the prince of this world, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience. The fear of God is not before their eyes, the ways of peace they have not known. It is their delight to fulfill the desires of the flesh and the carnal mind. Nothing but the power of God can change the affections of their hearts, and make them love the things they once hated. A new life, new affections and desires, have to be begotten within them. They have to be made new creatures. The change is a great one, and is called a birth, a resurrection, a creation, and regeneration, and without this change no one can ever know or enjoy spiritual blessings or comforts in this world, or inherit and enter into the bright and endless joys of the upper world.

I read, and saw the truth most plain:

The sinner must be born again, or drink the wrath of God.

This solemn truth stands as firm as the eternal throne. No other work will ever prepare the sinner to enter into, and enjoy the kingdom of God. 0, are we

today living careless and thoughtless upon this subject? Time with us is swiftly passing by, and we are rapidly approaching the eternal world, with this truth, as it fell from the Savior's lips, sounding in our ears: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." Dying sinner, these words are true. O, may God give you to see it, and feel it in your soul, and may he, by his power and grace, work this change in us, and then we shall sing,

**All hail the Lamb on Calvary slain,
For all who shall be born again,
Will shout thine endless praise.**