

# The New Birth

by Charles Anderson

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*The new birth is a spiritual experience where a person receives eternal life and a new nature through the word of God, which is the seed of eternal life.*

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 2:1

**Topics:** "New Birth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of different levels of light in the world, starting from the mineral world and progressing to the human world. He uses the analogy of grass and flowers to illustrate this progression. The speaker then transitions to discussing the importance of Christians laying aside malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil speaking. He challenges the notion that Christians are exempt from these negative traits and emphasizes the fallen nature inherited by all humans.

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## Transcript

This morning we are going to try to conclude the few thoughts that we've been trying to suggest in these morning sessions from the first chapter of 1 Peter. When we were students in Bible school, as most students do, we had a way of labeling our professors and our teachers with some special kind of label. And I remember that we had a teacher who was probably one of the most boring men I ever sat under, but who was a very godly man.

He taught the book of Romans, and his name was Yeomans. And so we students used to say, our class is roaming through Romans with Yeomans. That was our class first day, or the first thing in the evening.

Well, maybe you feel we've been plowing through Peter in this first chapter, and I was somewhat at a loss when I came as to whether we ought to take the broader view of the whole message of this epistle, try to get that across to you, or take another approach and that would be to maybe stick with the first chapter which I'm convinced is largely preparatory to what else Peter has to say to his readers in the rest of this epistle. And so, just for a moment of review to bring us up to date this morning, I'd like to remind you that Peter calls to their attention, these readers, that they are indeed scattered abroad, and they're strangers where they are. They're foreigners, but God has placed them in the location where they find themselves, even in a pagan culture, side by side, living side by side with pagan peoples.

This is all God's plan for their lives, and they must not resist it or complain about it, because their main purpose in living amongst the unconverted is that they might be seed spreaders. They might be those who

spread the seed of the word of God, and then he reminds them, furthermore, that they're unique people. Unique, if only because the entire Trinity has been employed in their redemption.

God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all combined in their salvation work to redeem these peoples who are, of course, believers in Christ. That gives them a very unique position, and furthermore, he says, you have been born into a new family, and that has brought with it certain privileges and blessings. One, a living hope that you have.

Not much hope down here in the environment in which you find yourselves, not much hope of a bright future because they were slaves, but you have a living hope, and that hope is guaranteed to us by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and that guarantee also assures us of the fact that, since we're in the family of God, we are heirs now to a great and grand inheritance. That inheritance is reserved for us, and we're kept for it, and that's all guaranteed to us by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. By this time, these readers ought to feel pretty good.

At least, they do have enough to encourage them to stand erect and tall even in the midst of difficult circumstances, and he reminds them that they must brace themselves for what is yet to come. Because of their identity with Jesus Christ and their relationship to him, they must expect opposition and persecution. That's bound to come, and he's going to talk about that more fully in the rest of his letter, but he's setting them up, getting them ready for it.

And then he says, furthermore, this wonderful salvation that God has provided for us has been what the prophets have puzzled about. There's some features about it they don't understand, particularly the time elements, and yet it was the great theme of the preaching of the apostles, and even the angels were curious about this thing. What was God going to do with this creature who had rebelled against him? Those angels, if they were in existence way back there when God judged the first great archangel, if that's what his position was, Lucifer, son of the morning, when he rebelled against God there was a great schism in heaven, and the judgment of God fell upon a lot of the angels who followed Lucifer in his rebellion, and they were cast out.

And now, maybe the angels are a little bit curious, is God going to do something like that with this creature, this frail, fragile person that he put on the earth bearing the stamp of his image and his likeness? How is God going to handle that problem of this rebel creature? They were curious about that, and when the plan of salvation was unfolded, the angelic curiosity increased, and Peter reminds them of all of this. You are now the objects of God's marvelous saving grace. Now, there are two things that ought to mark you because of that, and one of them, the first thing, is holiness of life, because you must remember that the one who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light is the holy Lord God, and as he is holy, he can expect nothing less than holiness in those who are his children.

So, holiness of life must be an outstanding characteristic of one who is a child of God. And then, in the second place, fervency of love toward one another ought to mark the children of God. Had our Lord not say, Hereby shall all men know that you are my disciples, not by the fervency of your faith, though that's important, not by your zeal, that's important, not by your energy of service, that's important, but by the fact that you love one another.

You have a very special kind of affection, a tie that binds you to others of like faith. That should mark you, and it should be an unhypocritical love, an unfeigned love, as the way Peter puts it, and we should love one another fervently. Now, maybe we don't love each other as fervently as we ought, but the fact still

remains that there is a very special tie between believers in Christ that doesn't exist anywhere else in society.

One may be a member of a lodge, or a country club, or some kind of society, some literary society, or art group, but you know there is not the same relationship between the members of these organizations and the members of the body of Christ. I'm sure you found it so in your experience that you've met people whom you never saw in your life before, and you were only with them a few hours when, as you left, you said to yourself, I feel like I've known them for 25 years. What is it that binds us together? It's this very special love that we have for each other.

As I said in, I think, our last study, the basis of that love is not so much our social attractions. To be honest with you, there are some Christians I don't like, but I love them. There's some Christians I don't like because, frankly, they're a pain in the neck, to tell you the truth, and they have peculiar habits.

You know, friend, one way to lose a good friend is to take a long trip with them. If it's only a day or two, you can endure it, but it gets to be two, three weeks, you get so you hate the sight, I'll whisper, you hate the sight of them. Ah, yeah, we took a trip once with some folks, drove all the way to California from this coast.

Man, never again. They're dear friends, but never again. That lady was downright fierce in the morning until she got coffee in her.

I mean, she was a shrew. She wouldn't even growl at you until she got a cup of coffee. Then there was a transformation.

She was livable from that point on, and woe betide us if we got on a long stretch where you couldn't get any coffee till about mid-morning. Man, it was wild. Well, we don't have to like each other, but we can love each other, and the reason we do, I say again, is not because of our attractions to each other physically, or socially, or financially, or what we can do for each other.

These are extraneous things. The reason we love each other is because we are loved of God. God loved us.

God thought we were worth redeeming. We may not have thought so, but He did, and He placed upon us His love, and He gave His Son, and so if He thought that of you and of me, then I can think no less of you, and I hope you of me. So, we love each other because we are of value to God.

Now, I think that's basic here in Peter, and so as we come to the close of this chapter, He now gives us another reason or basis for this attitude of love toward each other. Seeing you have, I'm reading now through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart, fervently being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. And that's a great verse of Scripture.

It is great for several reasons, one of them being that it is helpful in explaining to us that experience which Jesus told Nicodemus was imperative if anyone was to enter into or even see the kingdom of God. Ye must be born again, and what perplexed Nicodemus to understand often perplexes others to understand, and sometimes we have some difficulty in explaining to others. If I should stop right here and play the part of a professor or teacher in a class, I'm not going to do it, so relax.

I would call on some of you, you with the blue dress, and you, sir, with the yellow shirt, and I'd say, will you recite now? I want you to explain to me what the new birth is. How does it come about? What is it? What is the new birth? I dare say we would have some very interesting explanations. We would find a lot of us sort of beating around the bush in an attempt to explain what we mean, and what we think the Bible means by the new birth.

Now, Jesus sought to explain a little bit of that experience to Nicodemus, and now we have Peter who comes and gives us, I think, further elucidation on this experience. There was a man in England in the days of, I guess about Moody's time, named Henry Drummond. Henry Drummond is perhaps best known for a couple of things.

One of them was that he wrote that little gem called the greatest thing in the world, an exposition of 1 Corinthians 13, isn't it? The love chapter. Henry Drummond's little booklet is a lovely thing, giving exposition of that chapter. But, Henry Drummond, I think, was a theistic evolutionist.

By that I mean he believed in creation, but he also believed that God used evolutionary process to accomplish his creative purposes. He was maybe one of the earlier creation or creation evolutionists, and he wrote a book entitled *The Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. In its time, it was a very excellent and almost a pioneer book written on some scientific approach to the facts of life by a Christian.

Now, he has a very interesting thesis in that book. I wish I had a blackboard here this morning because you could see it a little more clearly, perhaps if I could scribble a little bit on the board, but try to imagine what I'm trying to show you. Henry Drummond said there are stratum, or layers, of life.

We have, we call them maybe the mineral world. The mineral world, that may be the inanimate level of life. The next level up from the mineral world is the vegetable world, and then the next level above the vegetable world is the animal world, and the level above that is the human world, and then he says above even that is the divine world, the world of the existence of God.

Now, he says it's a natural law. This is the natural law that no amount of effort on the part of any object in any one of these worlds can make it, enable it to lift itself out of its environment to the higher level. For instance, a stone can never become a squirrel.

Okay, it's impossible. Or, put another way, a stone can never become a cabbage, even though a stone may say, I'd love to be a cabbage. I have to be very careful, because once I was called a bad name in school.

I had a German professor, and good thing I didn't understand German. I made a blunder, and he said, ah, you are a dummkopf. Well, I came home and said to my wife, gee, I must have made it today.

My professor said, I'm a dummkopf. She says, you dummy, that means you're a cabbage head. Well, maybe a stone would say, I'd love to be a cabbage, or the cabbage might say, oh, I'd love to be a bird, and the bird might say, someday if I work hard enough, I will be a little boy, a child.

He said, these are utterly impossible, all against the law of nature. There's no way known to nature whereby objects or elements in any of these levels of life can, by dint of effort on their part, any kind of effort, raise themselves to the higher level. But, it is possible, he said, for any one of these objects to become part of the level of life above it, if the kingdom above reaches down into the kingdom beneath, and takes it into itself.

This illustration. The mineral can become the vegetable when the process of osmosis takes place, and the roots of a plant can absorb and change the chemicals in the inanimate world into themselves. Likewise, he says, the animal or the vegetable can become animal only if the animal reaches down into the vegetable world, and takes it into itself, eats it.

And, the animal can become the human not by the process of evolution, but when the human reaches down into the animal world, and takes it into itself, which you may have done this morning. Did you eat bacon? You took a little pig, and so pig becomes you, part of you, because you reached down into that world, and you took some of it into yourself. Now, he comes to the point which is vital spiritually.

He says, no amount of effort. How does the bible put it? Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy as he saved us. For by grace are you saved through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast.

No amount of effort, works, sincerity on the part of the human, can ever make the human become part of the divine. The only way the human can become part of the divine is when the divine God reaches down into the human realm, and takes man into himself. And, that was Henry Drummond's thesis of a natural law operating in the spiritual world, and it sounds quite sensible.

I don't suppose it could be contradicted very much by any known science. Now, with that in mind, Peter and I, I realized that the other evening I approached this a little bit, and said some things I'm going to repeat this morning, but so what? We're finished today, and you're going shopping anyhow. But, he says that this born again experience, it follows natural laws too.

You see, it is also a law of nature that all life exists or comes from pre-existing life. Now, that's a contradiction of evolution. Evolution, philosophically, says that life comes spontaneously.

It's a spontaneous thing. No, the bible would teach us that life comes from pre-existing life. That's a law.

It's always true. All life in the universe came from him who is the life. And so, and I'm not sure whether Dr. Drummond, in his book, talks about this or not.

My memory is vague on that, but all life by God has been deposited in a seed of life. We know this. It's true in the vegetable world.

It's true in the animal world. It's true in the human world. Therefore, it must be true in the divine world as well, and so it is.

God does not contradict what is already an operative law which he has established as a creator God. He doesn't contradict it as the redeemer God. Now, he follows this law through.

Therefore, what he's done is to have planted eternal life. How else are you going to, excuse me, how else can we explain the kind of life that we get from God? See, vegetables get vegetable life. Animals get animal life.

Humans get human life. What kind of life, what word can we use to describe the kind of life we get from God? Well, the only word I know that the Bible uses is eternal life, that eternal life which was in the fathers, the way John puts it. But, eternal, you see, we're so accustomed to thinking in terms of time that we may think that eternal means merely an extension of our existence.

We're never going to die ever again. We will live forever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and that's eternal life. Well, that's only one part of the true definition of eternal life.

Eternal life is not merely and only an extension of our existence, but it is a kind of life as well. It is the kind of life which is in God. It is God life, okay? And God's life, he has been pleased to deposit in the seeds of the words of his book.

That's why this book is so valuable and precious. The words of eternal life are found in the promises of the Bible. You see, friend, this is why it's so very important to quote the scriptures when we're dealing with unsaved people.

We think we overwhelm them with our logic. We may be confusing them with our logic, but the word of God is a powerful thing. There was a man in our town who was an alcoholic, and he owned a couple of businesses.

He was well known in the community, and yet for 25 years he was a slave to alcohol, and he tells, he told me how he got converted, and it was a remarkable story. He was in the local saloon sitting at the bar drinking, and he said what a lot of alcoholics often say in a moment of despair or or remorse or something, oh I wish I could kick this habit, boy, if I could stop drinking. I wish I could, but I can't, and he must have expressed that openly, and the bartender, get that, the bartender behind the bar said, have you ever tried praying? That's a peculiar thing for a bartender to say.

Have you ever tried praying? And Harry said to himself, no, I never tried that. I've tried some other things, but I've never tried that. Only thing is, I don't know how to pray.

I wonder how you pray? Who do you talk to? How do you, what do you say? And he got to thinking about that, and he said, well, there must be books on it somewhere, and the library's got books on everything. Maybe they had a book on prayer. So, he went to the Caldwell library, and he said to the librarian, madam, do you have a book on prayer? I think she nearly fainted.

Nobody ever asked for a book on prayer in that library, and she said, I don't know. I'll look around. I think we got one.

I think I saw it once. So, she checked her records, and she said, yes, we do, and she brought out a little thin book, not not too thick, entitled The Meaning of Prayer by Harry Emerson Fosbick. Now, if you know anything about Fosbick, you know he was the leading liberal theologian of his time.

He denied the inspiration of the bible. He denied the virgin birth. He denied the physical resurrection of Jesus.

He said anybody to believe in the second coming was a nincompoop, and so on, and so on. That was Fosbick's approach. So, here's a searching soul who has dropped in his hand a book by the leading liberal of the day, and so Harry took the book home, and as far as we know, we've checked it out, the only book that Fosbick ever wrote, and he wrote quite a few, in which the printers, or maybe he, I don't know, whenever he read he referred in his text to a bible verse, the printers gave the note and put the whole verse, quoted it, at the bottom of the page.

So, the book has a quite a few bible verses written on the bottom, and Harry told me, he said, I read that book, and sir, I didn't understand a thing that man was talking about. It left me cold. I didn't know what it

was all, I was so ignorant, but he said, I read all those verses on the bottom of the page, and you know what? I got convicted that I was a sinner, and I needed to be saved from those verses, not from Harry Emerson Fosbick's text, but from the verses of the word of God.

How's that come about? Well, that's because God has mysteriously, but really implanted the word, or the eternal life, in the words of this book. May I ask you, just for a moment, to turn to 2 Peter, just for a moment, for a further comment. 2 Peter, chapter 1, verse 3. According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these, these what? These promises, these exceeding great promises which become precious.

Can you think of a greater promise than this? Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation, but is already passed from death unto life. Can you think of anything? You insurance guys, can you promise anything better, bigger than that? Okay, nobody can promise anything more greater than that, and when you believe it, that great promise becomes a precious promise. Don't you love it, this God's word? That by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

How do we become partakers of the divine nature? Through these exceeding great and promises, words of the word in which God has implanted the eternal life, and when those seeds of the word are lifted out of the book of God, and they are implanted in the soil of the heart, the human heart already plowed up by the Holy Spirit in conviction, and seized upon and believed, then there is the transmission of God's life through his word into the believer. I believe in the biology of the new birth. I think it happens exactly like that.

We, um, we're parents, like I presume most of you, and we produce four sons. Now, they're, they're just preacher's kids, you know, pk's. They got all the faults of every other kid.

They busted more church windows, or as many as any of the kids in our congregation. They stole money out of the Sunday school collection box, like some other kids. You know, they weren't angels, weren't devils, but they were, I don't know what they were, they were between devils and angels, but they were ordinary kids.

Now, somehow we got a peculiar philosophy. We get the notion that all the good things that kids exhibit, the nice habits and politeness and so on, they inherited from their mother, and all the mischievous and, and, and bad things they get from their old man, and so whenever we would have guests come to our house for dinner, we'd get a briefing, all five of us, how to behave. Don't reach.

Don't say, hey, pass the butter, you know, or don't say, ain't you got no more potatoes, mom? You know, you don't say those things. You, you follow other rules, and so when we'd have guests, and the boys would behave so nice, oh, so nice, I didn't have to look up the other end of the table, but I got the feeling she's looking at me saying, see, that's my nature coming out in them. And when one of them reached for something when he shouldn't have, and knocked over the tomato juice and spilled it on the lovely white tablecloth, oh, I didn't dare look up then, because the feeling was, see, that's your nature coming out in them.

Now, the real truth, ladies and gentlemen, is we cannot divide those virtues and vices like that. Be nice if we could, but there's a mixture of good and bad that our children inherit from us. They inherit a fallen

nature.

How do they inherit that? That comes with the fresh edition, no extra charge. When the baby's born, it comes with a nature. Unfortunately, it's not a godly nature, it's not a holy nature.

Oh, it may look like a pretty sweet little innocent thing, but give it time. It won't be long before it'll shock its parents by the fact that it can lie, it can snitch, it can act mean, it can be selfish. Soon, the old sinful nature which it has inherited by its birth into the human race will begin to manifest itself.

It's inevitable, inevitable. Now, when you are born again into God's family, you also become a possessor of another nature. This one is totally different from the one you received at your first birth.

This is not a fallen, sinful nature, this is a holy, sinless nature, the very nature of God Almighty, so that in the Christian you have a very strange, peculiar creature walking the surface of this globe. He's a creature who has in him two diametrically opposed natures, an old, sinful one that has appetites, and desires, and lusts, and ambitions that are all bent in the wrong direction. And, he also has a holy nature which enables him to walk pleasing unto God, and there he is.

And, that explains why there's conflict in our lives many times, and all through our life it'll be there. As long as we're on this mortal coil until we shuffle off it, we'll have the old nature and the new nature. I was reared spiritually in a gang of people who believed in sinless perfection.

They talked about the second definite work of grace, and they would testify. Ten years ago, I was converted to Jesus Christ. I was saved on August the 12th of the year, and then five years ago, on September the 16th, I was wholly sanctified, and I haven't sinned for five years, four months, three weeks, two days, and three hours.

And, I used to sit with open mouth wondering, isn't that marvelous? And, another would get up and testify the years of sinless living. Poor people, they were deceived. They thought that somehow you could have the old nature extracted like a tooth, and you'd never have anything but a hole left there, and then you lived a holy, sinless life from there on.

I wish that were true. I'd like to believe it, but it ain't so, and it's not what the Bible teaches. So, we have these two natures.

How'd I get the second one? By a new birth, and how'd that come about? Well, that came about when exceeding great and precious promises from out of God's word like seeds fell into my hearing. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, and hearing that word of God, I believed it, and there was transmitted into my life, transferred into me in a very real, just as real a fashion as the time I was born the first time, that was transferred into my life and to yours, God's eternal life. What kind of life is in the seed is what is transmitted to those who receive that seed, and so that's why Peter says that this seed is incorruptible, incorruptible.

We have been born not of corruptible seed, we were born of that, but this new birth is of incorruptible seed by the word of God which lives and abides forever, and then he uses the illustration, all flesh is grass, and the glory of man is the flower of grass, and so on. Well, I should end there, and we must, because Wendy said that bus was going to be here any minute now, huh? Well, just one quick word, though, to tie it into chapter two. Unfortunately, there's a chapter division here.

I don't think it's proper to be here, but nonetheless. Wherefore, in the light of all of this, laying aside all malice, all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as wait a minute, Peter, don't you know you're talking to Christians? Christians don't have malice. Excuse me, can I snicker a little? F.B. Meyer said about malice, he defined it, he said, malice is anger cooled down to double distilled malignity, rejoicing in the misfortunes which come to others.

Mark Twain used to say, I never murdered a man, but I've read many a man's with sheer delight. Christians have malice. Unfortunately, that's an exhibition of the old nature.

What else? Guile. Lay that aside. These are the things that are going to hinder you from your spiritual development and growth.

If you're born, you're a baby, and you've got to grow, but be very careful that these things don't hinder you. Guile, that's trickery and fraudulence, hypocrisies, envy. Oh boy, that's a bad one.

That's rejoicing at somebody else's good. Oh, so you got to raise in salary. Isn't that nice? Instead of saying, hallelujah, that means you can give more to God's work, doesn't it? Get it in.

Boy, you got a chance. Oh, so you've been promoted. Hmm, that's nice.

You can tell by the way we respond how we're feeling. How come he got promoted and I didn't? Oh, so they've elected you an elder in the assembly. Hmm.

Don't they know I've been around here for 22 years? They never asked me. What's the matter with you? You know what's the matter with you? There's a weed growing in your garden called envy. It's there.

Better get it out. Boy, it'll get, it'll get tall. It'll spawn some others.

Envy, evil speaking, all these things. Lay them aside, says Peter, and as newborn babies, desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby. As newborn babes desire.

That's a good word. That's a fitting word for a baby. I'm telling you, when a baby is hungry, he will let you know it, and he'll let the whole house know it.

You better feed him, shove something in his mouth, or he'll drive you mad by his yelling, howling, and screaming. He desires food. He wants food, and what food does a newborn babe need? The sincere milk of the word, and the word that he uses there is the word from which we get our word adulterated.

He says he's got to have the milk that isn't adulterated, that isn't watered down, pure, sincere milk of the word that he may grow thereby, and so the exhortation here is to Christians to be sure that nothing is going to hinder our spiritual growth. One thing above all else we would want, and must desire, is to grow in the grace of God, and that growing process doesn't end, you know, with age. Well, we'll continue, because tonight I want to speak to you on life begins at 80, or thereabouts, and so it doesn't make any difference how old we are.

We ought to keep on growing, growing, growing until just a step beyond we're in the presence of Christ and perfected forever. Father, how we thank thee for thy word. We thank thee for the experience of the new birth that we can testify this morning has happened to us.

We rejoice in the knowledge that now we carry about in these bodies of ours the very life of God. We pray that thou have manifested, Lord Jesus, in holy living, in loving relationship one to the other, and in a clear-cut witness even against the opposition that will rise because we belong to thee. Bless thy word and our meditation on it this morning, we pray in the name of our risen Savior Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

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