

# The Process of Reproduction

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being born again and receiving the Holy Spirit into your life as a living Person, and that salvation is a very big thing, far transcending religion and a good moral character.*

**Scripture:** Acts 10:1

**Topics:** "New Creation", "Work of the Holy Spirit"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the process of forming the new-creation man through the work of the Holy Spirit, as illustrated in Acts 10. He highlights the extraordinary events surrounding the conversion of Cornelius, showing that it represents a larger movement of God to create a collective body of believers, transcending cultural and national identities. The sermon stresses that true salvation goes beyond moral goodness and religious practices, as even devout individuals like Cornelius need to be born again to fully experience the new creation in Christ. Sparks calls for believers to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's work in their lives, urging them to see others through the lens of Christ rather than their natural judgments. Ultimately, he encourages a deeper understanding of salvation that is rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

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## Transcript

Reading: Acts 10:1-11:18.

### The New Creation Man in Process of Formation

Acts 10 follows on what we were considering in our last message. It concerns this particular dispensation or age of the Holy Spirit, and the specific object which the Holy Spirit has in view during this age. We can put it in one phrase -- the formation of the new-creation man. This chapter is a phase in that formation, and therefore a phase in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

It is a remarkable chapter. Much that is in it can only be explained in the light of something very much bigger than the conversion of an individual. Not that the conversion of an individual is a small thing, by any means, but it would have been very easy and very much more simple just to have sent a preacher to Caesarea to proclaim the Gospel there, so that this one man heard it and got converted. Things like that were happening; that in general was what was taking place.

But there is a tremendous amount of -- if I may use the word -- "paraphernalia" about this that actually happened. It is something quite "extra" and extraordinary, even for the general movement of the preaching of the Gospel in those days. That an angel from Heaven should visit the man, that the Holy Spirit should speak to Peter, that there should be these strange accompaniments of the sheet let down and the voice speaking, and many other strange features and factors, all indicates that this incident must be set in a realm that is more than the conversion of an individual, however important that may be. It is a part of a great dispensational movement: all the forces at God's disposal in Heaven and on earth are brought into a "combined operation" in relation to this matter, for the man in the case is not just a man -- he is a representative.

If you think that that needs proving, you have only to look further into this book. You can see that this is a phase, and the outstanding phase, of all that is happening. You have only to step back two chapters -- and remember there are no chapters in the original record, it is one continuous narrative -- step back into chapter 8 of our arrangement, and you have that extraordinary matter concerning the Ethiopian. Here was this man, holding a position of great power in the palace of the queen of the Ethiopians, who had been up to worship, and was now going back -- a dissatisfied man. On his way back to Ethiopia, back to his seat of influence and activity, he has to pass by way of the desert; and the Spirit -- the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit -- speaks to a servant of God, named Philip, in Samaria. Great things are happening in Samaria, very important things are taking place there, much is going on under the power of the Spirit, but the Spirit touches Philip and says, "Now, go down toward Gaza, the way of the desert." And Philip obeys. He is at the disposal of the Holy Spirit; he has no arguments and no personal objectives. There is nothing contrary about him -- he is yielded to the Spirit. He obeys, and is brought into touch with this outstanding man, this representative man, this man who is right at the heart of everything in Ethiopia.

In chapter 9 we meet with another man, even more outstanding than the last. Saul of Tarsus was undoubtedly an outstanding man in every way. Whatever we may think about his persecutions, we must remember that he did it in all good faith. For him it was conscience; he was being utterly conscientious. Yes, he was an outstanding man, and again, a representative man -- a representative of a nation and a great nation, a man who had a place right at the very heart of things in that nation. And the same mighty movement of Heaven comes to him and lays hold of him. There are big things happening in relation to individual men.

And so we come, with the straight course of the narrative, to what we have in chapter 10. Here is another man. He is away up in Caesarea, the capital of the country, the very stronghold of Roman influence. All that Rome stood for was centred there. This man holds a place of power, position and importance right there, and so an angel and the Holy Spirit, as we pointed out previously, co-operated in relation to the winning of this representative man.

So we have an Ethiopian, a Jew, and a Roman: men representing nations of no small significance and influence. This is no ordinary thing. What is it all about? Well, as I have said at the beginning, there is a "new-creation man" in process of formation. Out of this dust of the earth God is forming His new corporate Adam after the image of the One that He has in His own presence, in the likeness of His own Son. A new creation is in process of formation, and it centres in man -- in a Man -- and that Man is in the glory. But that new creation man that is being formed after the likeness of the Man in Heaven is corporate -- the collective man after the likeness of THE Man, the last Adam.

Well, the new creation man is firstly Christ, and you notice how everything circles round Peter's words -- "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God" (Acts 2:22). And then in chapter 10, verse 42 -- "He charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of living and dead". That word "ordained" is the word with which we commenced our first meditation in this series. It is the Greek word from which we get the English word "horizon". We may perhaps think of Christ as marking the horizon of everything with God.

So everything here is within that horizon. The Holy Spirit is working within the horizon of Christ, the new creation Man, the last Adam. He is the new creation personally in God's very presence, but then He becomes the new creation Man dominantly. He is governing everything here -- not officially, but by His likeness. It is the likeness of this Man that is governing everything. God is working by the Holy Spirit to bring about something after the likeness of this Man, a collective man in the image and likeness of this individual perfected Man before God. And this Man is dominant, in the sense that His character dominates all the activities of the Holy Spirit: that is, the Holy Spirit is in action to bring about a collective reproduction of this individual new creation Man. Dominating the activities of the Holy Spirit is what Christ is as man, according to God's mind. Then follows, of course, the collective side of this, and that brings us here to these representative people.

#### The Natural Man Dismissed

Of what will this new-creation collective man be made? Will he be made of Peter and Cornelius and the Ethiopian? Not at all. You see, Peter is here very much in view as an instrument, and Peter naturally, according to his earthly life, is of Jewish constitution, Jewish mentality and Jewish horizon -- very much of Jewish horizon by reason of his very blood and his birth and his upbringing. He is horizoned by Judaism, by Israel. That is how he is constituted. Cornelius -- well, he is very Gentile-constituted. He is Roman, and he is very Roman, or he would not be a centurion. He certainly would not be in that place without being a Roman of the Romans. You know how these centurions were selected, on what grounds they were appointed. They were magnificent men, humanly speaking, splendid specimens, the best specimens of Roman life and training and discipline, and very thoroughly devoted to Roman interests. This man, being in Caesarea, is not a centurion of an outpost. He is at the heart of Roman influence in that part of the world, so that he is naturally Romanly constituted.

What we find, therefore, is not that these two men are brought into Christ just as Peter and Cornelius, but that they are disintegrated, broken up, broken down, put out, as to what they are naturally. They are born from another country, from above, brought into the kingdom of Heaven, brought into the "new creation man", the church, where there is "neither Jew nor Greek" nor Roman nor Gentile, but "all... one man in Christ" (Gal. 3:28), and "Christ is all" (Col. 3:11). You notice that even Peter has to be broken down, disintegrated, when he allows what is natural in his constitution to begin to influence his judgments and cause him to argue with the Lord. A transition has to take place in him, from the point at which he was commanded by the Lord to rise, kill and eat, and he said, "Not so, Lord" (verse 14) -- a transition had to take place, under this mighty breaking down of the Holy Spirit, to the point where he said, "He is Lord of all" (verse 36). Notice, not only of the Jews -- "Lord of ALL". That meant something very drastic in Peter's case, but it had to be done.

And so far as Cornelius is concerned -- I shall say a little more about him presently -- it is quite clear that in the issue of this he became a man governed not by Rome but by the Holy Spirit; under the influence not of what was natural but of what was spiritual; not earthly but heavenly. For you notice that the Heavens were

opened -- the Spirit of God from Heaven fell on them, and in so doing made them different. But they both had to be broken down in what they were naturally, and formed again, another vessel, not according to nature but according to Christ.

### The Spiritual Education of the Born-again

Now just one further glance at Peter in this connection. Peter had already been born from above, he was already in the kingdom of Heaven, he was already under the government of the Holy Spirit, but even with such people as Peter -- and none of us would claim to compare with him -- the Lord will not allow any of the old natural influences to arise and control judgments and movements. Those influences have to be put back, there has to be still fuller, deeper conformity to the image of the Man who is not this or that, but is different altogether from all the rest. You and I must remember that, though we are born again, we are not permitted to allow our natural judgments, standards, conceptions or mentality about people to influence us. We have to get Heaven's estimate.

And what a revolutionary thing that is! Consider for a moment the contents of this sheet that was let down to Peter: four-footed creatures, reptiles, birds -- and the inference is that they are "unclean" birds naturally -- just the very things that were forbidden in Leviticus 11 to be eaten by the Jews. And Peter is informed that Heaven's point of view is altogether different from his. Although he may have the most utter conviction about this matter and his mentality may judge this people to be altogether outside the pale of the kingdom of Heaven, Heaven's view is quite different, completely different. Peter has got to learn not only what it means to be born from above, but what it means to be conformed to the likeness of the Man above.

There is a great deal to be done in all of us about this matter. We are so influenced by our own constitution, by our own make-up, by our own natural outlook, mentality or training, and we think God has got to come into line with that, conform to that and accept that. But the Lord is teaching us the very hard lesson that He does not accept our mentality at all, He does not accept our standards, He repudiates much that is a strong conviction with us, even religiously, and demands of us things that "religiously" we would never do. That perhaps needs a little safeguarding, but I say it within the right realm and the right limits. What it amounts to is that when the Holy Spirit comes in we have to go out of court. He must be allowed to have His mind about things and people and ways and means, for He is not going to accept ours. Peter, as Peter naturally, will have to be set aside. It is a large part of our education.

And if that was true of Peter, it was of course much more true of Cornelius, because he was not yet born from above. He has got to be born from above -- to cease to be Cornelius, the Roman centurion, and simply become a man in Christ. Thank God, there were all the possibilities of that with Cornelius. God had an open way with him.

Well, the Holy Spirit obliterated Peter and Cornelius and put Jesus in their place. That is what it amounts to, that is what He was working toward. But you see, the whole dominating objective is this divine conception of a man as gathered up in the Person of Jesus Christ, a new creation man in Himself. His purpose is to gather into Himself, not OF all nations, but OUT of all nations -- there is a profound difference -- to gather out of all nations that which will compose and comprise the collective new creation man. Let us therefore at once be ready to be stripped of all our national prejudices, to let go all those things which govern our attitudes and judgments. Let us be free for them to go, to leave us. Let us seek very much, earnestly and continually, to "know no man after the flesh", but to know only Christ, to cleave to Christ, to make everything of Christ in one another.

Oh, may God give me, and give you, grace to make more of Christ -- even when we may feel there is only a very little of Him -- in other people. Fasten on to that measure, small though it may be, and make that the all-important, paramount thing. It is an absolute essential in our apprehension of the Body of Christ, and that is the very work of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation. If the Holy Spirit is in us and we know anything about registering the movement, the voice, the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, when we pass a wrong judgment upon someone else or take more account of that which they are naturally than of Christ in them, we shall meet a rebuke, we shall sense a displeasure of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Lord to make you sensitive to the Holy Spirit in this matter, that Christ may grow and grow. We do make it difficult for Christ to grow in other people. We do get in the way of the Lord Jesus. We do tie Him up, because we do not seek to release Him and make the most of Him in one another. We are so ready to fasten upon the things that run counter to our prejudices and contrary to our ideas of what ought to be. Let us make more of the Lord Jesus. That is the setting of this tenth chapter of Acts, in its dispensational meaning and its supreme concern.

### The Need of the Naturally Morally Good for Salvation

In conclusion, I want to indicate briefly the bearing of this word upon the preaching of the Gospel. There are many aspects of the Gospel application of all that is going on in the book of the Acts. Take this man Cornelius. There are some grand things said about Cornelius. He is a very devout man, he honours God, he is a man who prays to God; he is a man of practical charity, he gives alms -- that means he has the interests of other people at heart, he is not living to himself. As you look at him naturally, he is a fine man, characterized by an honest and pure spirit -- there is no doubt about it. We wish everybody were as ready as Cornelius was to respond, to answer without argument, without prejudice. He was a fine specimen of a man: I expect physically he was that; certainly he was that morally, mentally and religiously.

And yet -- and yet -- Heaven and earth are combining in a mighty movement to get that man SAVED. Everybody would say, "That is surely enough; that man honours God, he is a God-fearing man, he prays, he puts his religion into practical expression. That man is unselfish, he is generous, he is kind in his actions, he cares for other people, he is full of charitable works: what more do you want? That man is going to Heaven, if any man is!" And yet, I say again, Heaven moves, and Heaven moves earth: the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the great dispensation, on the one side; on the other side, angels at work, co-operating. For what purpose? -- to get such a man saved. He is not yet born again, he has not yet received the Holy Spirit. With all, he does not know the Lord Jesus in a personal way. He knows about Him. Peter says so. "You know all about what happened, you know the story of Jesus of Nazareth; but you do not know Him personally."

Well, what are you going to make of that? That is not my interpretation, that is not my Gospel, that is not my prejudice: that is the clear statement. If anything could be more vivid, tell me what it is! Here is the point. Why, as I put it earlier, all this excitement, all this "paraphernalia", all these extraordinary things? Why does Peter go up to the housetop and pray at 12 o'clock, and then want his dinner terribly, so badly that he sends downstairs and asks them to get something ready, and Heaven comes in and takes hold of his very hunger to make him to understand, appreciate, heavenly things, taking occasion by this to give this vision? What is all this about? Why should an angel go up there to Caesarea and visit Cornelius and speak to him, and why should it be necessary for him to send men and a soldier all the way from Caesarea down to Joppa -- 35 miles -- and then for Peter to have to take the long journey back? Why all this, if this man is such a good man and is going to get through all right?

No, the new creation is something much more than religion, than praying, than giving alms, than being charitable. Christ is much more than that; the Holy Spirit is after more than that. You may say, "I do not agree -- I believe if you do your duty and you are kind and you recognise God and you go to church you will get through all right". You take this account and read it again. This is a positive denial of any such thing, and to settle down in such a position is to assume something which is not true. There are many in the position of assumed salvation, and there will be for them a very great undeceiving unless something happens. This is not enough. The Spirit of God takes great pains to get even a Cornelius -- as he did also with another devout man, the Ethiopian, who had been up to Jerusalem to worship God. Likewise Saul of Tarsus, a man who was utterly devoted to what he believed to be God's will, God's way. The Holy Spirit -- Heaven -- comes in in mighty power to get these people saved. Salvation is a very big thing, far transcending religion and a good moral character and many kindly activities. Salvation is far more than that.

But, thank God, Cornelius was prepared. Here is something very precious about it all. You may be like that -- you may not be one of those who could be classed as an outrageous sinner and criminal and offender, marked by all those things which society calls bad. You may be God-fearing, you may pray, you may be doing many kind things; and yet, like Cornelius, you may still have, somewhere deep down, the feeling that there is something more. "I am after something, I am reaching out for something; I do not know what it is, but I feel I need something more; all my praying and all my doing is only an expression of a longing for something -- I want to get somewhere that I have not yet got!" That was Cornelius, and God took account of it and worked to see that he got what he needed and what his heart longed for. When Cornelius heard it, he instantly responded, and in effect said, "This is just what I have been after! I did not know what it was, but this is it! This answers my longing, this answers my praying, this meets my deeply-felt need!" The very story at its end seems to say that. Oh, how full of joy and thankfulness they were! God had been doing something in preparation.

It may be that you who read these lines are prepared for something God has for you -- you do not know what it is. Do not be deceived by the fact that you pray and go to church, even that you attend Christian conferences or do kind things. Do not be deceived. Be sure that you are positively born again -- that you have received the Holy Spirit into your life, as a living Person, and know that He is there. Do not rest until that is true -- otherwise there will be a grievous awakening and disillusionment. Do not assume anything. Demand that you KNOW. The basis of your knowledge is the present, instant indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It may be that some longing of yours, some hunger, some unexplained and inexplicable feeling of need in you is just God's way of preparing you for what He offers, what He presents, and what He may be saying to you at this very moment. There is something more, and you will find that "something" when you receive the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Man in the glory. That Man is God's satisfaction, and therefore He will be our satisfaction too.

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