

THE SPIRIT AND REGENERATION

1. What is regeneration?

Re (again) *generation* (birth). Regeneration is the new birth. It is the new life we have in Christ. Once we were dead; now we live in Him and He lives in us. Regeneration is *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (the title of a book by Henry Scougal).

Titus 3:5. *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.*

The cleansing of our souls (symbolized by baptism) = the renewing of our nature by the Holy Spirit.

2. Why do we need a supernatural new birth?

We are dead

Ephesians 2:4-5. *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).*

We can't come to Christ

John 6:44. *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

God does not keep us from coming to Christ. Our inability to come lies within ourselves. We are hostile to God's holiness and unwilling to humble ourselves before Him.

Romans 8:7 ... *the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.*

We can't will our own new birth

John 1:12-13. *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

3. What is the relationship between the new birth and faith?

John 3:1-12 (*Born again* may be translated *born from above.*)

The necessity of the new birth for salvation

v. 3 To see the kingdom of God

v. 5 To enter the kingdom of God

Water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit as in Isaiah 44:3

(less likely water = baptism; or physical birth; or the word of God)

v. 7 *You must be born again* is literally, *It is necessary for you to be born again.*

It is not a command.

The necessity of new birth for faith

Because Nicodemus had not been born again, he did not—

v. 10 *Understand* the teaching of Jesus

v. 11 *Accept* the testimony of Jesus

v. 12 *Believe* Jesus

Nicodemus was a prominent teacher of the Jews. Why might it have been helpful to him to have his great learning challenged by Jesus saying that he had to be born again to understand, accept, and believe Jesus? Why do sinners need to hear that they are helpless to save themselves or to get themselves born into God's family?

There is no formula for getting the new birth or for getting faith, but a sense of your helplessness may be God's first step in your conversion. If a person in some measure believes that the gospel is true, but then finds that he cannot trust Jesus, let him echo the prayer of the man who said, "I do believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

4. What is the instrument God uses to give new birth?

1 Peter 1:22-23 *Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, ²³for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.*

Romans 10:9-14, 17 ... *if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. ¹¹For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; ¹³for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." ¹⁴How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ... So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

God uses the preaching of His word to give people the new birth and to bring them to faith in Christ. I am preaching to you tonight. Are you uncertain whether you are saved or not? Do you believe that Jesus died to save sinners like you? Do you believe God raised Him from the dead? I beg you, I urge you right now to call out to the Lord to save you. You will not be disappointed. He will save you. Then you can say, "The Holy Spirit has caused me to be born again. The Spirit of God has given me faith. Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Is God calling you? Is the Father drawing you? Come to Christ. Come! Come! Come!

5. Evidences of the new birth

Faith

A transformed life

John 3:8. *The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.*

The world does not understand what has happened to a man or woman who has been born again. The Spirit moves them unexpected directions. Their old haunts see them no more, and their ungodly companions want them no longer.

New creatures in Christ

2 Corinthians 5:17. *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

Love and happy obedience

1 John 5:1-4. *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith.*

6. What the new birth is

An instantaneous work of God

There may be many things leading up to it, such as gradual convictions that the gospel is true, a sense of need for Christ, an appreciation of the glory and beauty of Christ. Regeneration itself happens in a moment. When Jesus called Lazarus out of the grave, one moment he was dead. The next he was alive. And so it is when the Lord quickens a soul by the preaching of the word and the inner working of the Spirit.

A partaking of the divine nature

2 Peter 1:4 *For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.*

At the new birth the Holy Spirit enters into a new, unbreakable union with your soul. He begins the process of transforming you into the image of Christ, and your responsibility is to submit to Him. As you do you begin to be able to do what Peter says next.

2 Peter 1:5-8 *Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,⁶ and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,⁷ and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your*

brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ *For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The beginning of sanctification

1 Corinthians 6:11 *Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*

2 Thessalonians 2:13 *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.*

The foundation of the Spirit's work in our lives

The Spirit gives us faith. By faith we are united to Christ, so God declares us righteous and adopts us into His family. Through faith we receive the Spirit (Galatians 3:14) and with Him come all His gifts—

- Assurance of our adoption (Galatians 4:6-7)
- Permanent indwelling (Romans 8:9)
- Incorporation into the church, the body of Christ (Baptism in the Spirit and gifts—1 Corinthians 12)
- Sealing (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30)
- The ability to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-21)

We should not think of these as entirely separate works of the Spirit. They are different effects of the one great fact – Jesus Christ lives in us through His Spirit.

“The giving one gracious discovery or act of grace, or a thousand, has no proper natural tendency to cause an abiding habit of grace for the future; nor any otherwise than by Divine constitution and covenant. But all succeeding acts of grace must be as immediately, and, to all intents and purposes, as much from the immediate acting of the Spirit of God on the soul, as the first; and if God should take away His Spirit out of the soul, all habits and acts of grace would of themselves cease as immediately as light ceases in a room when a candle is carried out. And no man has a habit of grace dwelling in him any otherwise than as he has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him in his temple, and acting in union with his natural faculties, after the manner of a vital principle” (Jonathan Edwards, *Treatise on Grace*).

“... apart from the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we have no desire either to love God or our neighbors. It is due to the Holy Spirit's promptings from within that we learn to love God; and as the love of Christ is poured out in our hearts, so we learn to love our brethren.” (Andrew Murray, *The Secret of The Throne of Grace*)