

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – PART 1

REGENERATION

Definition

- Regeneration is the impartation of eternal life, through the empowering work of the Spirit of God...it is the act of God by which He imparts new spiritual life to those previously dead
- Regeneration by the Holy Spirit is the spiritual counterpart of human reproduction in the physical realm - Human generation produces human life; spiritual regeneration produces spiritual life.

The Work of the Trinity in Regeneration

God the Father is the Author

- Regeneration is totally a work of God

Ezekiel 36:26-27 ~ Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

John 1:13 ~ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Ephesians 2:5 ~ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Colossians 2:13 ~ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

1 Peter 1:3 ~Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

- It was when we were dead that God interfered and made us alive...such a work can only be done by the One who is Himself alive (Romans 4:17 ~ who gives life to the dead)

God the Son is the Mediator

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.

Ephesians 2:10 ~ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

1 John 5:11, 20 ~ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son...And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

1 Peter 1:3 ~Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

God the Holy Spirit is the Agent

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John 3:5-8 ~ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 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.”

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,

- Jesus’ phrase “born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5) harks back to Ezekiel 36:25-27, where God is pictured as symbolically cleansing persons from sin’s pollution (by water) and bestowing a “new heart” by putting his Spirit within them

The Nature of Regeneration

It Involves Conviction of Sin

- The Holy Spirit is involved in pointing out sin in order to bring about repentance
- The Holy Spirit shows unbelievers their need for the gospel...He works on the minds of the unsaved to show them the truth of God for what it is

John 16:8-9 ~ And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged

- Sin is rebellion against God...really the greatest sin is the failure to believe in Jesus
- Most people do not readily admit to being guilty of sin...they will admit to failures or vices; but most will still protest that they are basically good
- Sin, however, is against God and people have suppressed the truth of God (see Romans 1)
- Thus, the mighty working of the Holy Spirit is necessary to convince and convict people of their desperate plight and their need for a Savior
- He brings conviction to the world and does so by revealing sin, directing the way to righteousness, and warning of impending judgment
- It is as He says: “You should not sin, but should pursue righteousness in the face of judgment”...all 3 are aspects of His ministry of correction and reproof
- So, the Holy Spirit shows unbelievers their need for the Gospel...in this sense, this work of the Spirit does not distinguish between the elect and the non-elect because His ministry of convicting the world of sin is directed toward the entire world
- As an expression of common grace, the Spirit’s reproof works alongside this “general” or “external” call of the gospel (Matt 22:14)
- But is this enough for a person to be saved? → What about 1 Corinthians 2:14?

1 Corinthians 2:14 ~ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

- Paul’s point is that those who regard the gospel as foolishness lack the spiritual insight required to see its legitimacy....thus, this “general” or “external” call of the Gospel can be resisted
- If they are to come to faith, they are in need of something more....

It is Closely Associated with the Effectual Call/Irresistible Grace of the Elect

- In order for sinners to be converted, they must receive God’s effectual call, a call reserved only for the elect
- Thus, the regenerating work of God’s effectual call is necessary for salvation: Grudem: “Effective calling is thus God the Father *speaking powerful to us*, and regeneration is God the Father and God the Holy Spirit *working powerfully in us*, to make us alive” (pg. 700)
- That this “special call” is available only to the elect is clear from Romans 8

Romans 8:29-30 ~ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

- When God issues an invitation to salvation, it is in one sense extended to all persons in the form of an external or general calling (see Prov 1:24-26; Matt 22:14; Luke 14:16-24)
- Romans 8, however, is describing a narrower form of divine invitation...an invitation extended only to the elect
- This work of God can be referred to as “irresistible grace” in that it is never refused or “efficacious grace” in that it is always successful in accomplishing its purpose
- Thus, this work of the Holy Spirit cannot be resisted since those whom God has called will be justified and this call ultimately lead to the salvation of the elect...the effectual call then compels the human will to believe and be saved
- Thus, in calling the elect, God actually (not just potentially) brings them to conversion
- This effectual calling/regeneration is the bridge between predestination and justification...as such, it is appropriate to regard this work as the means by which God, through the Holy Spirit, brings the elect to faith
- Since unbelievers are not capable of properly evaluating the gospel message unless they are given insight by the Holy Spirit, it is the work of the Spirit that removes the blindness and enables them to see the cross as their only hope of salvation

It Occurs Through the Instrumentality of the Word of God

- As the gospel comes to us, God speaks through it to summon us to himself (effective calling) and to give us new spiritual life (regeneration) so that we are enabled to respond in faith
- God uses His Word, applied by the Holy Spirit, to make his elect alive

Romans 10:17 ~ So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

1 Peter 1:23 ~ for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

James 1:18 ~ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

- A few examples of the role of the Word of God in the act of regeneration

Acts 10:44 ~ the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word

Acts 16:14 ~ and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 ~ It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Thus regeneration and the effectual calling consist in large measure of the Holy Spirit's work of illumination, thereby enabling the recipient to understand the true meaning of the gospel
- The Spirit grants insight where once it was lacking
- This act of regeneration is further described in 2 Corinthians 4

2 Corinthians 4:6 ~ For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

- As the outward call of God to faith in Christ is communicated through the reading, preaching, and explaining of the contents of the Bible, the Holy Spirit enlightens and renews the heart of elect sinners so that they understand the gospel and embrace it as truth from God, and God in Christ becomes to them an object of desire and affection
- The Spirit illuminates and animates the Word of God. As we listen to the Scripture, we come to the conviction that we hear the very Word of God itself.
- God does not save us "automatically" without our mind, emotions, and will being affected by the Gospel truth
- An unbeliever cannot thwart God's effectual call in their hearts, but this does not mean that people come into the kingdom "kicking and screaming" against their will...rather, their choice is genuine, but it is generated, carried along, and brought to fruition by the Spirit

It is a Monergistic Act

- Regeneration is not synergistic (involving 2 or more people)...it is a monergistic act (involving only 1 Person)...it does not entail our "cooperation"
- Man contributes nothing to his "new birth" since he is spiritually dead; therefore we play no active role at all...we are totally passive...it is totally a work of God

John 3:3, 5, 7 ~ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one **is born** again he cannot see the kingdom of God"...Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one **is born** of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"...Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must **be born** again.'

- In all three occurrences, "born" is in the passive tense; It is something that takes place to a person, not something they do to themselves
- That's why Jesus uses the analogy of birth here...A baby does not decide to get born...It is an action in which they had no input – it is impossible for a baby to do anything to be born...No baby ever thinks: I think I would like to become a person, be alive...so I will cause myself into existence...I will cause myself to be born...Infants do not induce, or cooperate in their own birth
- Christ chose this analogy for a very important reason: No spiritually dead person can prompt the quickening action of the Holy Spirit within them...No unbeliever can effect their own new birth
- It must be an act that is done by God Himself

John 1:13 ~ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

- John's point here is that the only way to gain spiritual rebirth is if God does the work
- People must be born from above to be saved...God must replace the heart of stone with a heart of flesh in order for a person to be born again...It is all a work of God

- And John uses 3 negative expressions to communicate this
 - “not of blood” - Refers to physical descent, heritage, ancestry
 - “nor of the will of the flesh” - Refers to sexual impulses...the desire to fulfill fleshly passions
 - “nor of the will of man” - Refers to the procreative urge to have children
- John’s point: In no sense whatsoever do believers derive their birth or standing from physical or biological causes...It’s from God alone
- No amount of human effort can produce spiritual birth...All human initiative is ruled out

Ephesians 2:5 ~ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)

Colossians 2:13 ~ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

We are helpless to cooperate in our regeneration as we are to co-operate in the work of Calvary.

Iain Murray

No more soul-destroying doctrine could well be devised than the doctrine that sinners can regenerate themselves, and repent and believe just when they please...As it is a truth both of Scripture and of experience that the unrenewed man can do nothing of himself to secure his salvation, it is essential that he should be brought to practical conviction of that truth. When thus convinced, and not before, he seeks help from the only source whence it can be obtained. –

Charles Hodge

It is an Instantaneous Act

- It happens at a point in time

Ephesians 2:5 ~ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)

- We may not always know when this instantaneous change occurs, but it occurs in an instant

It is Must Come Before Saving Faith

- It is the new birth that enables us to respond in faith

Practically regeneration may be seen as the time when the Spirit of God, upon an unsaved person, removes the heart of stone he had been born with and replaces it with a heart of flesh in order that he may respond positively to the Gospel which he could not understand before. Thus we see that according to Jesus Christ, regeneration precedes faith.

Matthew McMahan, sermon on monergism.com

- Regeneration is what actually produces faith, not the other way around
- Faith is the evidence of being made alive, not the cause of it

INDWELLING

- Although the Holy Spirit was with people in the OT, He did not indwell them
- This fact is made obvious by Christ:

John 14:17 ~ *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

- This indicates a difference between the ministry of the Spirit in the OT and after Pentecost
- Although Christians vary greatly in spiritual power and in manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, Scripture teaches plainly that every Christian is indwelt by the Spirit of God since the day of Pentecost

- The Holy Spirit is a gift:

John 7:37-39 ~ Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ” But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Romans 5:5 ~ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

2 Corinthians 5:5 ~ Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge

Galatians 4:6 ~ Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

- A person without the Holy Spirit is not saved:

Romans 8:9 ~ However you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Jude 19 ~ These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit

- The Holy Spirit even indwells believers who are living according to the flesh:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ~ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

- Notice that the reality of being indwelt with the Spirit was the basis of Paul’s appeal to believers to conduct themselves righteously

- So at the moment of salvation, every believer is indwelt with the Holy Spirit
- Do the following passages indicate that not all believers are indwelt with the Spirit or can lose the Spirit?

1 Samuel 16:14 ~ Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him

Psalms 51:11 ~ Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Acts 5:32 ~ And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.

Acts 8:14-17 ~ Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit

- Normally the Holy Spirit baptizes, indwells, and seals at the moment of faith, but in this instance the delay served an important purpose
- For centuries, the Samaritans and the Jews had been bitter rivals...if the Samaritans received the Spirit independent of the Jerusalem church, that rift would have been perpetuated....there could have been 2 separate churches – a Jewish church and a Samaritan church
- By delaying the Spirit's coming until Peter and John arrived, God prevented a schism and preserved the unity of the church, welcoming the Samaritan believers officially into the church

Acts 19:1-6 ~ *It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying*

- These "disciples of John" were not yet fully Christians
 - Paul then told them that John pointed to Jesus Christ as the One in whom they should believe
 - They believed the Gospel as presented by Paul and were saved through Christ...as a result, the Holy Spirit came upon them
- How is the indwelling of the Spirit different from the baptism of the Spirit? Filling of the Spirit?

SEALING

- The sealing of the Holy Spirit is the pledge or guarantee that the believer will enter into his completed redemption at the return of Christ
- This sealing is the Holy Spirit's action at conversion that signifies God's possession, securing salvation and future certainty and occurs at the point of salvation

Ephesians 1:13-14 ~ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

2 Corinthians 1:22 ~ who has sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge

2 Corinthians 5:5 ~ Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge

- "pledge" = a first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge, that pays a part of the purchase price in advance, and so secures a legal claim to the article in question, or makes a contract valid
- It is a payment which obligates the contracting party to make further payments
- The fact of the sealing is the basis for Paul appealing to believers to not grieve the Spirit:

Ephesians 4:30 ~ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- The ramifications of the sealing of the Holy Spirit:
 1. Signified ownership by God - The Spirit's seal upon the believer indicates the believer belongs to God
 2. Suggests security - The seal is permanent, "for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30)
 3. Suggests authority - Just as the Roman authority existed over the area where the Roman seal was placed, so the authority of God is over the believer to whom He has given His Spirit
- Thus, this fact should bring great assurance and comfort to the heart of every believer
- Like the indwelling of the Spirit, the sealing of the Spirit is not an experience but a fact to be accepted by faith