

THD-033 and 034
Galatians 5:16-21
The Holy Spirit and the
Christian - Part 2

*“Blessed [happy] are they
that hear the word of God,
and keep it.” (Luke 11:28)*

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Rom. 11:6, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."

Gal. 2:21, "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

Gal. 3:24, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."

1 Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Peter 1:2-3 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that [pertain] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue...

*I am come that they might
have life, and that they might have it more
abundantly. John10:10*

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” – John 15:9-11 ESV

Galatians 4:15
What has happened to all your joy?

The answer, for the Christian, lies herein:

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The Galatian Christians had lost their joy, because the Judaizers had meddled in their Christian Lives and introduced the Law. Paul introduces, here, a clear delineation between the Law and the Spiritual Life. Previously we have looked at the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a Person and as Deity, and are currently studying the Role of the Holy Spirit in Relation to The Christian
From L.S. Chafer

Introduction to the Work of the Holy Spirit in the Believer - Chafer

"When considering the amount of Scripture pertaining to it, the Spirit's relation to the Christian is seen to be the major feature of the entire doctrine respecting the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament alone, where the truth regarding the Holy Spirit is given its fullest presentation, there is set forth, as noted above, both the fact that the Spirit restrains the world (which is largely disclosed in one passage) and the fact that He enlightens the unsaved (also a limited body of truth); but the whole unfolding revelation of the New Testament regarding the Holy Spirit occupies a great portion of the New Testament, insomuch that this age of the Church is also properly styled the dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

The divisions of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as related to Christians contemplate two general features, namely,

- (a) the Holy Spirit's work in and through the believer and
- (b) the believer's corresponding responsibility.

In addition to the two ministries of the Holy Spirit already attended [1. He restrains the world and 2. the fact that He enlightens the unsaved], there are still five more and they constitute the Spirit's relation to the Christian, these with the two presented above making a total of seven ministries of the Holy Spirit in this age. Of the five now in view, the first four may be classed in one group ... since they represent the Spirit's undertakings in behalf of all who are saved. These are vital features of salvation, being wrought to infinite perfection for each believer at the moment he is saved. Likewise, these four ministries represent aspects of the Spirit's work which are never repeated, being accomplished once for all.

The fifth in this series, which is also seventh when all the Spirit's ministries are contemplated, is that of the **Spirit's filling**—itself unique in that it is not a feature of salvation, for not all Christians experience it and it must be renewed constantly. [**Gala 5:16 *But I say, walk by the Spirit...***]

In no particular are the distinctions between these seven ministries to be treated lightly.

It is at this point, and for want of accuracy in the analysis of these truths, that sincere yet misinformed groups of Christians have separated themselves over questions of holiness and certain manifestations of the Spirit's presence.

The five distinctive ministries of the Holy Spirit to the believer are now to be considered in the following order:

- (a) regeneration,
- (b) the indwelling of the Holy Spirit,
- (c) the baptism with the Holy Spirit,
- (d) the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and
- (e) the filling with the Holy Spirit.

a) Regeneration and the Holy Spirit

In the incomparable purpose of God by which He is bringing "*many sons unto glory*" (Heb. 2:10) and to the end that Christ may be the first-born among many brethren (Rom. 8:29)—no less an undertaking than that of populating the third and highest heaven (hitherto the abode only of the triune God) with beings suited to that holy and exalted sphere and, indeed, sufficiently perfected to be the all-satisfying Bride of the Second Person—one vital step is that of constituting these beings partakers of the very nature of God...

The human mind cannot approach the comprehension of that which is involved in the immeasurable realities of an actual sonship relation to God, which makes the Christian an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17).

I. The Necessity

Before the kingdom of God may be entered by a fallen individual from this human sphere, there must be a God-wrought metamorphosis in the form of a birth from above...

Such a birth is specifically indicated by Christ in His words to Nicodemus: *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (John 3:6)

II. The Impartation of Life

In the stupendous task of preparing and qualifying fallen, earthly beings for the company of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—even to be a suitable Bride for the Lamb—in the highest heaven and glory, the partaking of the divine nature by the impartation of the very life of God is one of the most important features of the whole transforming undertaking.

The receiving of the divine nature means that the individual thus blessed has been born of God.

God has become his legitimate Father and he is the Father's legitimate son.

This is a change so radical and so complete that there is thus achieved a passing from one order of being into another.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

The conception that regeneration by the Holy Spirit is an indefinite influence for good in the individual's present life is far below the conception set forth in the New Testament.

There it is taught that a new and eternal order of being is created with indissoluble filial relations to the Creator of all things.

The fact of the new birth, whether comprehended or not, is the basic and distinguishing feature of the Christian.

The life of God which is eternal and which therefore Christ is has been imparted as definitely as the breath of natural life was breathed by God into Adam at the first creation.

At least eighty-five New Testament passages aver that a Christian is a changed person by virtue of the fact that he has received the very life of God.

Christ said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6) and *"I am come that they might have life"* (John 10:10).

So, also, *"the gift of God is eternal life"* (Rom. 6:23).

1. A Knowledge of God.

From the heart with definite consciousness of His reality, the saved one will be able to say, “Abba, Father.”

Such a recognition of God as Father is wrought in the heart by Christ.

Of this He said, *“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matt. 11:27–28).

The rest here promised is that of the soul and is the result of coming to know God as Father.

It is one thing to know about God, but quite another thing to know God.

According to this great invitation, it is possible to come to know the Father by the gracious offices and effective working of the Son, and no soul has ever found true rest apart from this intimacy with God.

2. A New Reality in Prayer.

Prayer is communion with God that has been based on confidence born of the knowledge of God.

It is not natural to speak to one who is unknown and unknowable as is the case with the unsaved trying to pray; but when God is recognized and real to the heart, there is definiteness in every form of prayer and then, as at no other time or under no other conditions, the praying soul finds rest.

3. A New Reality in the Reading of God's Word.

The Word of God is food only to those who have received the nature of God.

As a newborn child cries for food, so will a normal Christian desire the Word of God.

That Word is milk to such as are "babes" and "strong meat" to those prepared in heart to receive it.

4. A Recognition of God's Family.

John places this to the front as a very dependable test of whether an individual is a child of God.

He writes: *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"* (1 John 3:14).

The Christian naturally delights in the fellowship of those who are saved.

His love for them will be manifested in loving sacrifice for them.

This is not human love, but an outworking of the love of God shed abroad in believing hearts from the indwelling Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

5. A Divine Compassion for a Lost World.

The objects of the divine love are unchanged respecting their identity even when that love is reproduced in or is passing through the Christian. He will love, therefore, what God loves.

This is indeed an extensive field of contemplation. Above all, the love of God for a lost world—that love which spared not His Son in consequence—will be wrought in the child of God as an unceasing burden for those who are unsaved.

This constitutes a suffering in company with Christ, and for it there is great reward. *“If we suffer [with Him], we shall also reign with him.”*

All of these experiences which have been indicated are naturally the expression of the new divine nature; but, like all Christian experience, it may be hindered and all but unobserved owing to some unspiritual condition that is allowed to exist in the heart of the believer.

If the indwelling Holy Spirit who is the Reproducer of Christ in the believer is grieved, the power of His presence will not be made manifest.

At this point, the danger should be recognized of judging anyone according to that one's experience or conduct.

Even though every normal experience is enjoyed, yet how limitless is that which awaits the day of His manifestation!

III. Acquisition of the Nature of God

The basic fact of having a new divine nature imparted is of such a character that it must be recognized at once as a change that God alone may effect.

Human effort is utterly foreign to the entire undertaking.

Where would Nicodemus begin were he to attempt the achievement of his own birth from above?

That alone which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Closely allied to the gift of eternal life is the impartation of the divine nature.

Probably distinctions cannot be drawn between them.

The child of God, receiving these realities, enters upon a career thereby in a realm of relationship which belongs to another order of existence.

IV. Induction into the Family and Household of God

No earthly relation so unites members of the human race as does the family, and so this human kinship is the best available illustration of the heavenly association together of believers.

Both the fact of father and son relationship and the fact of brotherhood appear.

As indicated above, the Fatherhood of God is due to an absolute divine generation: though, as in the case of the birth of Christ, the generating is wrought by the Third Person, still the First Person is universally addressed as the Father of all who believe.

The placing of an individual into the family and household of God is no mere adoption, though a believer is adopted in the sense that when born of God as His child he is at once advanced to the position of an adult son with all the privileges and responsibilities attendant on full maturity.

The human practice of adoption, which merely establishes legal responsibility over an otherwise unrelated child, imparts no parental nature and creates no actual oneness with the new parent.

The family and household of God is composed of the actual and legitimate offspring of God. No such relationship is intimated between Jehovah and the Israelites.

The whole nation Israel is likened to a son, but wholly as an expression describing Jehovah's care over them. The styling of a nation as a son is far removed from the generating of individuals into eternal, unalterable offspring of God.

Membership in the household and family of God implies fitness for the position.

For a brief time—the period of the Christian’s life on earth after he is saved—the Father does get on with imperfections in His child and administers discipline [Hence the need to *“walk by means of the Spirit”*]; but in an eternity of reality which follows, the members of His family will demonstrate how to all infinity the saved ones have been *“made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light”* (Col. 1:12).

V. Inheritance of a Son's Portion

Based on the actuality of sonship through the generating power of the Holy Spirit is the unavoidable fact of possession of a son's portion.

The extent of that portion is indicated by the Apostle when he avers: *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”* (Rom. 8:16–17).

The eternal sonship of Christ is in view here and into this heirship in which are included all the treasures of the universe, all the πλήρωμα of wisdom, and the infinity of authority and power, the newly constituted sons are brought as “joint-heirs with Christ.”

VI. God's Own Purpose to His Eternal Glory

Most arresting and encouraging is the revealed truth that all that enters into constituting a Christian what he is and what he will be in glory is wrought of God.

The Apostle declares: *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"* (Eph. 2:10).

By so much every uncertainty about the ultimate outcome of regeneration is dismissed forever.

Life's varying experience may present immediate problems; but the essential factors of salvation, preservation, and eternal glory are His to accomplish and are never made to depend upon human success, achievement, or merit.

The Christian learns after he is saved—not before—that he has been “*chosen in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world,*” that in due time and by the power of God alone he came into a saved relationship to God on the principle of grace, and that by the same divine power he will appear in glory—all in the unchangeable faithfulness of God.

It is written of believers: “*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Phil. 1:6).

Great significance is to be seen in the description of a believer as one “called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

That purpose of God is immediately defined in the context, which reads: *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified”* (vss. 29–30).

To be “conformed to the image of his Son” indicates that divine sonship is to be realized on the part of the one who is saved—a sonship patterned after the very *image* of the Son of God.

No word of God ever disclosed a higher estate and destiny than this; but it is yet added, “that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Christ will indeed be First-Born in point of time and in character, the Source of all that enters into the Christian’s eternal reality and glory; but the emphasis indicated here is rather on the fact that all those thus saved are His *brethren*, being begotten of God as such and constituted actually and immutably the sons of God.

Too often it is assumed that Christ came into the world so that men might have a new ideal for daily living, an example of an exalted character, or a new rule of life. When Christ said, however: “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10)—but one of about eighty-five passages bearing on this essential factor in the Christian’s new being—He was speaking of an imparted life which no human being has ever received or possessed apart from the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

With all reason, God appeals to the saved one for a daily life which is in accord with this high calling in Christ; but the need for holy living must ever be disassociated from “the gift of God [which] is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

The possession of eternal life creates the true motive for holy living; certainly holy living will never impart divine life or substitute for a birth from above by the Spirit.

A commendable daily life represents the purpose of the one who lives it; the gift of eternal life represents the eternal provision of God for man which He purposed in Christ Jesus.

From this sublime truth the spiritual mind naturally advances to the contemplation of the fact that the divine purpose, like all the works of God, will yet be so realized and completed to infinity that God will be satisfied with it and be glorified by it.

[Ephesians 4:24 (NKJV) *24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*]

Thus it is concluded properly that salvation from its beginning in the eternal counsels of God, down through the provision of and exercise of redeeming grace, and on to its consummation in glory is wrought only by God and with the same purpose ever in view, namely, that it should redound to His eternal glory.

He will of a certainty be glorified thus.

VII. The Basis in Faith

Reason alone would dictate the truth that, since salvation is altogether wrought of God, the individual who cares to be saved can sustain no other relation to it than to receive it in simple faith.

Every aspect of salvation in its completed, past tense—release from sin's penalty, in its present tense—release from sin's power, and in its future tense—release from sin's presence, calls for dependence upon God.

The great realities, namely, *forgiveness*, the *gift of eternal life*, and the *gift of righteousness* which is the ground of justification (Rom. 3:22, 26; 4:5; 10:4), are the portion of those who do no more than to believe in Jesus as Savior.

Two passages bearing upon this essential truth will suffice here:

(a) John 1:12–13: *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power 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.”*

It is to them that receive Christ, or believe on Him, that right both to become and to be the sons of God is accorded.

This means that God’s answer to an individual’s faith in Christ is such that by the power of God he is born of God and thus becomes an actual son of His.

The knowledge of the Savior upon whom faith must rest is gained from the word of God through the Spirit, hence Christ said that such are born of the Word which is symbolized by water and the Spirit (John 3:5) and the Apostle declares: *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”* (Titus 3:5).

(b) John 3:16: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

What statement could be more direct or conclusive than this?

It is asserted that “*whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*”

Thus without exception all that enters into salvation, including the gift of eternal life, depends only on the one human requirement of believing on the Savior.

An excellent treatment of the doctrine of regeneration is included in Dr. John F. Walvoord’s book cited previously.

Since this is so well stated and since the theme is so vitally important, these pages, though extended, are reproduced here.

In his introduction Dr. Walvoord states: “Few doctrines are more fundamental to effective preaching than the doctrine of regeneration. Failure to comprehend its nature and to understand clearly its necessity will cripple the efficacy of Gospel preaching. Both for the Bible teacher and the evangelist an accurate knowledge of the doctrine of regeneration is indispensable.

The Biblical concept of regeneration is comparatively simple, and a study of its theological history is not entirely necessary to accurate preaching. The history of the doctrine, however, reveals its natural pitfalls and may warn the unwary of the dangers of a shallow understanding of regeneration. The doctrine of regeneration offers a rich reward to those who contemplate its treasures and live in the light of its reality” (*The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, p. 140).

On the meaning of regeneration Dr. Walvoord writes: The word *regeneration* is found only twice in the New Testament (Mt. 19:28; Tit. 3:5), but it has been appropriated as the general term designating the impartation of eternal life. Only one of the two instances in the New Testament is used in this sense (Tit. 3:5), where reference is made to “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” The Greek word παλιγγενεσία is properly translated “*new birth, reproduction, renewal, re-creation*” (Thayer).

It is applied not only to human beings but also to the renewed heaven and earth of the millennium (Mt. 19:28). In relation to the nature of man, it includes the various expressions used for eternal life such as *new life, new birth, spiritual resurrection, new creation, new mind, "made alive," sons of God, and translation into the kingdom*. In simple language, regeneration consists of all that is represented by eternal life in a human being. Theological usage of the word *regeneration* has tended to confuse rather than enrich the word.

Other words such as *conversion*, *sanctification*, and *justification* have been either identified or included in the concept of regeneration. Roman Catholic theologians have regarded *regeneration* as including all that is embraced in salvation, not only justification and sanctification, but even glorification. Regeneration is taken to include the means, the act, the process, and the ultimate conclusion of salvation. Protestant theologians have been more cautious in extending the meaning of regeneration. The early Lutheran theologians used *regeneration* to include the whole process by which a sinner passed from his lost estate into salvation, including justification.

Later Lutherans attempted a clarification of the doctrine by holding that justification did not include a transformation of life, thereby excluding sanctification from the doctrine of regeneration. The Lutheran Church continues to hold that infants are regenerated at the moment of water baptism, however, at the same time affirming that this regeneration signifies only their entrance into the visible church, not their certain salvation. Regeneration becomes then merely a preparatory work of salvation.

On the subject of infant regeneration, the Lutheran theologian Valentine writes: “May the child be said to be *regenerated* by the act of Baptism? We may properly answer, Yes; but only in the sense that the established vital and grace-conveying relation, under imputed righteousness and the Holy Spirit, may be said to hold, in its provisions and forces, the final covenanted development” (*Christian Theology*, Vol. II, pp. 329–30). Valentine objects, however, to the statement that baptism regenerates children.

Elsewhere, Valentine writes, “Justification *precedes* regeneration and sanctification” (*Ibid*, p. 237). It is clear that Lutheran theology does not use the term in the Biblical sense of impartation of eternal life. The Lutheran theology does, however, exclude sanctification from the doctrine of regeneration. Reformed theologians have failed to be consistent in usage also, and have shared to some extent the errors embraced by others. During the seventeenth century, conversion was used commonly as a synonym for regeneration. This usage ignored a most important fact, however—that conversion is the human act and regeneration is an act of God.

Further, conversion, while usually related to regeneration, is not always so, as demonstrated by its use in connection with Peter's repentance and restoration (Lk. 22:32), as prophesied by Christ. Even Calvin failed to make a proper distinction between regeneration and conversion. Charles Hodge, however, argues effectively for the necessary distinction in the meaning of these terms (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, pp. 3–5).

Shedd agrees with Hodge and cites the following contrasts: “Regeneration, accordingly, is an act; conversion is an activity, or a process. Regeneration is the origination of life; conversion is the evolution and manifestation of life. Regeneration is wholly an act of God; conversion is wholly an activity of man. Regeneration is a cause; conversion is an effect. Regeneration is instantaneous; conversion is continuous” (*Dogmatic Theology*. Vol. II, p. 494).

For the last century, Reformed theologians have agreed that regeneration properly designates the act of impartation of eternal life. As Charles Hodge states it: “By a consent almost universal the word *regeneration* is now used to designate, not the whole work of sanctification, nor the first states of that work comprehended in conversion, much less justification or any mere external change of state, but the instantaneous change from spiritual death to spiritual life” (*Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 5). In a study of the doctrine of regeneration, then, the inquirer is concerned only with the aspect of salvation related to the impartation of eternal life.

Other important works which may attend it, be antecedent to it, or immediately follow it, must be considered as distinct works of God.—*Ibid.*, pp. 140–43

So, also, of regeneration as an act of the Holy Spirit, Dr. Walvoord declares:

Regeneration by its nature is solely a work of God. While sometimes considered as a result, every instance presumes or states that the act of regeneration was an act of God. A number of important Scriptures bear on the subject of regeneration (John 1:13; 3:3–7; 5:21; Rom. 6:13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:5, 10; 4:24; Tit. 3:5; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 2:9). It is explicitly stated that the one regenerated is “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13).

Regeneration is likened unto resurrection, which by its nature is wholly of God (John 5:21; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 2:5). In other instances regeneration is declared to be a creative act, the nature of which assumes it to be the act of God (Eph. 2:10; 4:24; 2 Cor. 5:17). It may be seen clearly, then, that regeneration is always revealed as an act of God accomplished by His own supernatural power apart from all other agencies. The work of regeneration is properly ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

Like the work of efficacious grace, regeneration is often ascribed to God without distinction as to Persons, and in several instances is ascribed to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit severally. The First Person is declared to be the source of regeneration in at least one instance (Jas. 1:17, 18). Christ Himself is linked with regeneration several times in Scripture (John 5:21; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 5:12). Again, the Holy Spirit is declared the agent of regeneration (John 3:3–7; Tit. 3:5). As in other great undertakings of the Godhead, each Person has an important part, in keeping with Their one essence.

As in the birth of Christ, where all the Persons of the Godhead were related to the conception of Christ, so in the new birth of the Christian the First Person becomes the Father of the believer, the Second Person imparts His own eternal life (1 John 5:12), and the Holy Spirit, the Third Person, acts as the efficient agent of regeneration. The work of regeneration can be assigned to the Holy Spirit as definitely as the work of salvation can be assigned to Christ.— *Ibid.*, pp. 143–44.

On the important truth that eternal life is imparted by regeneration, the same writer asserts:
As the word itself implies, the central thought in the doctrine of regeneration is that eternal life is imparted. Regeneration meets the need created by the presence of spiritual death. The method of impartation is, of course, inscrutable. There is no visible method or process discernible. By its nature it is supernatural and therefore its explanation is beyond human understanding.

The Scriptures in presenting the impartation of eternal life use three figures to describe it. Regeneration is sometimes presented in the figure of new birth. As Christ told Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). In contrast to human birth of human parentage, one must be born “of God” (John 1:13) in order to become a child of God. According to James 1:18, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” The figure is eloquent in portraying the intimate relation of the child of God to his heavenly Father and in relating the kind of life the believer in Christ receives to the eternal life which is in God.

Frequently in Scripture, regeneration is portrayed as spiritual resurrection. The Christian is revealed to be “alive from the dead” (Rom. 6:13), and God “even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Eph. 2:5). Christ Himself said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25). The fact of our resurrection is made the basis for frequent exhortation to live as those raised from the dead (Rom. 6:13; Eph. 2:5, 6; Col. 2:12; 3:1, 2).

Regeneration is also presented in the figure of creation or re-creation. We are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10), and exhorted to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24). The revelation of 2 Corinthians 5:17 is explicit, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” The figure of creation indicates that regeneration is creative in its nature and results in a fundamental change in the individual, a new nature being added with its new capacities. The individual becomes a part of the New Creation which includes all the regenerated ones of this dispensation and Christ its Head.

The new life given to the Christian is manifested in the new capacities and activities found only in those regenerated, forming the source and foundation of all other divine ministry to the saved. The important fact, never to be forgotten in the doctrine of regeneration, is that the believer in Christ has received eternal life. This fact must be kept free from all confusion of thought arising from the concept of regeneration which makes it merely an antecedent of salvation, or a preliminary quickening to enable the soul to believe. It is rather the very heart of salvation.

It reaches the essential problem of absence of eternal life without which no soul can spend eternity in the presence of God. Regeneration supplies this lack of eternal life as justification and sanctification deal with the problem of sin specifically. It is a smashing blow to all philosophies which hold that man has inherent capacities of saving himself. Regeneration is wholly of God. No possible human effort however noble can supply eternal life. The proper doctrine of regeneration gives to God all glory and power due His name, and at the same time it displays His abundant provision for a race dead in sin.—*Ibid.*, pp. 144–45

Again, that regeneration is not accomplished by means is well expressed by Dr. Walvoord as follows: Reformed theology has definitely opposed the introduction of any means in accomplishing the divine act of regeneration. The question of whether means are used to effect regeneration is determined largely by the attitude taken toward efficacious grace. Pelagian and Arminian theologians, holding as they do to the cooperation of the human will and the partial ability of the will through common grace or natural powers, recognize to some extent the presence of means in the work of regeneration.

If the total inability of man be recognized, and the doctrine of efficacious grace believed, it naturally follows that regeneration is accomplished apart from means. Reformed theology in keeping with its doctrine of efficacious grace has held that the human will in itself is ineffectual in bringing about any of the changes incident to salvation of the soul. As related to faith, the human will can act by means of efficacious grace.

The human will can act even apart from efficacious grace in hearing the Gospel. In the act of regeneration, however, the human will is entirely passive. There is no cooperation possible. The nature of the work of regeneration forbids any possible human assistance. As a child in natural birth is conceived and born without any volition on his part, so the child of God receives the new birth apart from any volition on his part. In the new birth, of course, the human will is not opposed to regeneration and wills by divine grace to believe, but this act in itself does not produce new birth.

As in the resurrection of the human body from physical death, the body in no way assists the work of resurrection, so in the work of regeneration, the human will is entirely passive. It is not that the human will is ruled aside, nor does it waive the human responsibility to believe. It is rather that regeneration is wholly a work of God in a believing heart. All other means are likewise excluded in the work of regeneration. While regeneration is often preceded by various antecedents such as the work of common grace and accompanying influences, these must be sharply distinguished from regeneration.

Even the work of efficacious grace, though simultaneous with regeneration, and indispensable to it, does not in itself effect regeneration. Efficacious grace only makes regeneration possible and certain. Regeneration in its very nature is instantaneous, an immediate act of God, and in the nature of an instantaneous act, no means are possible. The fact that regeneration is consistently revealed as an act of God and the Scriptural revelation of the doctrine of efficacious grace are sufficient evidence for excluding the possibility of the use of means in effecting regeneration.—*Ibid.*, pp. 145–47

Of great import, especially to all evangelistic effort, is the word by Dr. Walvoord respecting the nonexperimental character of regeneration, which reads:

Until the matter has been considered carefully, it is a striking thought that regeneration is not experimental. In Christian testimony, much has been said of the experience of regeneration. If regeneration is instantaneous and an act of divine will, it follows that regeneration in itself is not experimental. It may be conceded freely that abundant experimental phenomena follow the act of new birth.

The experiences of a normal Spirit-filled Christian may immediately ensue upon new birth. This fact does not alter the non-experimental character of regeneration. If it be admitted that regeneration is an instantaneous act of God, it is logically impossible for it to be experimental, in that experience involves time and sequence of experience. It may be concluded, therefore, that no sensation attends the act of new birth, all experience proceeding rather from the accomplished regeneration and springing from the new life as its source. In the nature of the case, we cannot experience what is not true, and regeneration must be entirely wrought before experience can be found.

While the regenerated soul may become immediately conscious of new life, the act of regeneration itself is not subject to experience or analysis, being the supernatural instantaneous act of God. The non-experimental nature of regeneration if comprehended would do much to deliver the unsaved from the notion that an experience of some sort is antecedent to salvation, and, in turn, it would prevent those seeking to win souls of expecting in partial form the fruits of salvation before regeneration takes place.

The popular notion that one must *feel* different *before* being saved has prevented many from the simplicity of faith in Christ and the genuine regeneration that God alone can effect. The non-experimental nature of regeneration has also, unfortunately, opened the door for the teaching of infant regeneration as held by the Lutheran Church. It is argued that if regeneration is not experimental, there is no valid reason why infants cannot be regenerated.

The normal pattern for regeneration is that it occurs at the moment of saving faith. No appeal is ever addressed to men that they should believe because they are already regenerated. It is rather that they should believe and receive eternal life. Christians are definitely told that before they accepted Christ they were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). The case of those who die before reaching the age of responsibility is a different problem. The proper position seems to be that infants are regenerated at the moment of their death, not before, and if they live to maturity, they are regenerated at the moment they accept Christ.

Infant baptism, certainly, is not efficacious in effecting regeneration, and the Reformed position is in contrast to the Lutheran on this point. The doctrine of infant regeneration, if believed, so confuses the doctrine as to rob it of all its decisive character. No one should be declared regenerated who cannot be declared saved for all eternity—. *Ibid.*, pp. 147–49

In concluding his thesis on regeneration, Dr. Walvoord writes of the *effect* of regeneration and indicates truth respecting a new nature, a new experience, and a new security. Of all this he says:

The work of regeneration is tremendous in its implications. A soul once dead has received the eternal life which characterizes the being of God. The effect of regeneration is summed up in the fact of possession of eternal life. All other results of regeneration are actually an enlargement of the fact of eternal life. While life itself is difficult to define, and eternal life is immaterial, certain qualities belong to anyone who is regenerated in virtue of the fact that eternal life abides in him.

In the nature of eternal life, it involves first of all the creation of a divine nature in the regenerated person. Without eradicating the old nature with its capacity and will for sin, the new nature has in it the longing for God and His will that we could expect would ensue from eternal life. The presence of the new nature constitutes a fundamental change in the person which is denominated “creation” (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15) and “new man” (Eph. 4:24). A drastic change in manner of life, attitude toward God and to the things of God, and in the desires of the human heart may be expected in one receiving the new nature.

The new nature which is a part of regeneration should not be confused with the sinless nature of Adam before the fall. Adam's nature was a human nature untried and innocent of sin. It did not have as its source and determining its nature the eternal life which is bestowed on a regenerated person. The human nature of Adam was open to sin and temptation and was peccable. It is doubtful whether the divine nature bestowed in connection with regeneration is ever involved directly in sin. While the Scriptures are clear that a regenerated person can sin, and does sin, the lapse is traced to the sin nature, even though the act is that of the whole person.

This must not be confused with various statements to the effect that a Christian can be sinless or unable to sin. The state of sinless perfection can never be reached until the sin nature is cast out, and this is accomplished only through the death of the physical body or the transformation of the body without death at the rapture. Even the new nature, though never the origin of sin, does not have the ability sufficient to conquer the old nature.

The power for victory lies in the indwelling presence of God. The new nature provides a will to do the will of God, and the power of God provides the enablement to accomplish this end in spite of the innate sinfulness of the sin nature. The state of being in the will of God is reached when the will of the new nature is fully realized. Eternal life and the new nature are inseparably united, the nature corresponding to the life which brings it into being.

While regeneration in itself is not experimental, it is the fountain of experience. The act of impartation of eternal life being instantaneous cannot be experienced, but the presence of eternal life after regeneration is the source of the new spiritual experience which might be expected. New life brings with it new capacity. The person who before regeneration was dead spiritually and blind to spiritual truth now becomes alive to a new world of reality. As a blind man for the first time contemplates the beauties of color and perspective when sight is restored, so the new-born soul contemplates new revelation of spiritual truth.

For the first time he is able to understand the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. He is able now to enjoy the intimacies of fellowship with God and freedom in prayer. As his life is under the control of the Holy Spirit, he is able to manifest the fruit of the Spirit, utterly foreign to the natural man. His whole being has new capacities for joy and sorrow, love, peace, guidance, and all the host of realities in the spiritual world. While regeneration is not an experience, it is the foundation for all Christian experience. This at once demands that regeneration be inseparable from salvation, and that regeneration manifest itself in the normal experiences of a yielded Christian life.

Regeneration that does not issue into Christian experience may be questioned.

One of the many reasons for confusion in the doctrine of regeneration is the attempt to avoid the inevitable conclusion that a soul once genuinely regenerated is saved forever. The bestowal of eternal life cannot be revoked. It declares the unchangeable purpose of God to bring the regenerated person to glory. Never in the Scriptures do we find anyone regenerated a second time.

While Christians may lose much of a normal spiritual experience through sin, and desperately need confession and restoration, the fact of regeneration does not change. In the last analysis, the experiences of this life are only antecedent to the larger experiences the regenerated person will have after deliverance from the presence and temptation of sin. Regeneration will have its ultimate display when the person regenerated is completely sanctified and glorified. Our present experiences, limited as they are by the presence of a sinful nature and sinful body, are only a partial portrayal of the glories of eternal life.

Through the experiences of life, however, the fact of regeneration should be a source of constant hope and abiding confidence “that he which hath begun a good work ... will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:16).—*Ibid.*, pp. 149–51

Conclusion

Regeneration is a most essential step in that preparation which must be made if individuals from this fallen race are to be constituted worthy dwellers within that highest of all spheres and made associates there with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It becomes one of the greatest facts in the whole universe.

Its full extent and value will be seen not on earth or in time, but in glory and for all eternity.