

Regeneration: The secret act of God whereby He graciously and powerfully imparts new life to us, so that we see our desperate need for salvation and God’s provision in Christ, are humbled to repentant faith in Him.

“To sanctify a man is the work of the whole life; but to give a man a new heart is the work of an instant. In one solitary second, swifter than the lightning flash, God can put a new heart into a man, and make him a new creature in Christ Jesus. You may be sitting where you are today as an enemy of God with a wicked heart, hard as a stone, and dead and cold; but if the Lord wills it, the living spark shall drop into your soul, and in that moment you will begin to tremble--begin to feel; you will confess your sin, and fly to Christ for mercy. Other parts of salvation are done gradually but regeneration is the instantaneous work of God’s sovereign, effectual, and irresistible grace.” ~Charles Spurgeon, *The New Heart*

The Necessity of Regeneration

The BAD NEWS (v1-3): RUIN – Dead in Sin, Enslaved to Satan, and Condemned to God’s Wrath; Regeneration is Necessary and Primary, not Optional or Secondary

1. We Were Dead in the Morgue

a. Humanity, dead in sins, is incapable of spiritual righteousness, good

i. We were dead (*νεκρός*), without breath, lifeless, from which Jesus was raised

1. *Dead* has the basic meaning of powerless, even when used metaphorically
2. We were dead, incapable of even seeing the kingdom of God (John 3:3) until we are born again by the work of God in His glorious kindness toward us
3. We weren’t merely in God’s doghouse, needing to be forgiven, but we were in the morgue, needing Life, Creation, Resurrection
 - a. In the doghouse, you can think about what you’ve done, but in the morgue?

ii. This does not mean that people cannot be *benevolent* or *good*

1. People can give selflessly and for the benefit of others
2. If God limited all benevolence merely to believers, what a nasty world we would live in. God has limited man’s evil universally by His own power and gracious mercy
 - a. Rom 1:21; 2:15 – they knew God, but did not honor Him but exchanged Him for idols – law written on their hearts, conscience bearing witness
 - i. God has made every human “in His image”, and as such there is an echo of “creative, life-giving, work” in every person
 - b. 1 Tim 4:10 – Any deliverance is from God (“the Savior of all persons”) and in a special way to believers (“especially of believers”)
 - i. All truth is God’s truth
 - ii. All good ultimately comes from God (Jam 1:17) and He uses whomever He wishes to deliver it

iii. It does mean, however, that even our most benevolent good done in the deadness of our relationship with God is still unrighteousness to God b/c it is done *with ourselves as the center of the Universe*.

1. The primary root of sin is this self-worship, making ourselves the center of the Universe, the place only God is worthy of holding
 - a. Think about how often we do this:
 - i. When you have an argument with somebody, and you leave and replay it in your head, considering all the things that you'd wished you had said, etc. – when you replay that argument in your head – who wins?
 - ii. When somebody shows you a picture from your HS graduation – where does your eye go first?
 - b. All of our hatred, warfare, violence, pathologies, fears, anxieties, stem from this fundamental rebellion of God as the center of the Universe
 2. So that even our Virtue is indicted by God as rebellion:
 - a. Romans 14:23b - ...everything which is not from faith is sin.
 - b. Romans 3:9-10 – all are under sin, no one is good, not even one. “no fear of God” (v18)
 - c. John 3:20-21 – in our nature of sin, dead, we will avoid coming to God b/c He reveals our sin; only those whose deeds are “wrought in God” come to God (and we do come to God!)
 - d. Romans 7:18 – nothing good dwells in my flesh (dead nature apart from the Holy Spirit), no ability, no God-firstness
- b. Being dead in your trespasses (*παραπτώμα*) and your sins (*αμαρτια*)
- i. “Being” – participle, indicates the ongoing state of existence
 - ii. Our sins are the fruit of our deadness, and our lifelessness toward God, separated without hope
 - iii. Man's Inability to Please God:
 1. Rom 8:7-8 – mind of flesh is hostile to God, doesn't submit, not able to do so, and therefore cannot please God.
 2. 1 Cor 1:18-31 – God's Word and ways were deemed to be “foolishness”
 3. 2 Cor 4:3-6 – we were blinded, unable to see the light of the gospel until God shines forth into hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
 - iv. This state of being is *qualitative*:
 1. It is the qualitative, or “kind” of life, which is rooted in Self-reliance, whether religious or irreligious
 - a. Rom 1:17-32
 - i. We, in our sin, exchanged the glory of God for idols, so God handed us over to them as captive to these same lusts; they declare us to be “good” but enslaved us to self-destruction as enemies of God
 - b. This kind of life loves and worships our own wisdom, righteousness, distinctions, as Ultimate, and God as needing to be “remade” into our image
 2. It is this quality of deadness, a “kind” of existence from which affections (desires) spring forth
 - a. Desires: “bad things comfort me”

- b. Thus, our will is unaffected (we still will to do things), but it is our affections, our desires, that master us so that we will in rebellion to God

2. This Deadness Worked Itself Out in Rebellion Towards God

- a. Remember your former condition so that your current condition is seen in the light of the glory of God's grace toward you!
- b. We were enslaved to an Evil Power greater than us
 - i. Following the age of the world
 - 1. Self-worship is "easy" because human culture makes it plausible
 - 2. "There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is death." (Pr 14:12)
 - ii. Following the prince of the power of the air
 - 1. Just like in the garden, we listened to Satan
 - a. God has granted Satan the power of the "air" wherever humans live (we need air to exist), not merely heavens
 - b. followed his "wisdom" ("you will be wise like God") of self-trust, working outside of God's revealed plan
 - c. We marched to the beat of his drum: "It's about me!!"
 - 2. We, ourselves, embraced the position of enemies to God (Rom 5:10) and then were made captive to him, needing rescue from someone more powerful
 - 3. The one even now working in the sons of disobedience
 - a. We were sons of this family of disobedience, sided by Satan
 - b. Disobedience to God was our *nature of deadness*, religious or irreligious
 - c. Satan exacerbates our lusts, so that our selfishness is institutionalized and lauded in the very structure and forms of society
 - iii. Following the lusts of our flesh
 - 1. Carrying out the desired will of the flesh
 - a. To be its own master, to be the center of the Universe
 - 2. Carrying out the desired will of the mind
 - a. puffed up in arrogant "knowledge"
 - b. Wisdom that makes all power within my own grasp
 - 3. Performing in the passions of the mind (*dianoia*, root of understanding and desiring) (both mind and desires dead to God but wandering under the power of Satan)
 - a. We needed to be liberated from deadness toward God, from Satan's power, and from our selfish desires *because these dishonor God and destroy us*
- c. Were being children of wrath by nature
 - i. Man's Condemnation
 - 1. This state of being, rebellion to God, dead to what we were made for, made us enemies of God *actively*
 - a. Romans 5:10 – we became *enemies* of God
 - Rom 8:7 – we were *hostile* to God
 - Col 1:21 – *hostile* in mind, engaged in evil deeds
 - James 4:4 – friendship with the world makes one an *enemy* of God!

2. We like to think that we were neutral, cosmic Switzerland, but we were not
3. It is *God's* wrath that is coming.
 - a. We were "by nature children of the wrath OF GOD."
 - b. This means that we naturally did those things which God hates. By nature we rejected the knowledge of God (Romans 2:28), and by nature we refused the gospel (1 Corinthians 2:14), and by nature we were filled with desires that amounted to idolatry (Colossians 3:5).
- ii. just like the rest
 1. That is, just like those who are currently opposed to and rebellious towards God

The Gracious Act of Regeneration

THE GOOD NEWS (v4-5): REGENERATION – God Has Made Us Alive in Christ, Freed Us from Satan, Delivered Us from His Wrath in Christ

- Regeneration is God's Work, Not Man's Work: Regeneration is a transition from spiritual death to spiritual life, and conscious, intentional, active faith in Christ is its immediate fruit, not its immediate cause

1. God has given us new life in Christ
 - a. Being wealthy in mercy
 - i. *Abundance* of mercy
 - ii. "Being", our state of deadness is contrasted with God's state of mercy
 - b. Because God loved us with HIS kind of love
 - i. God's love goes beyond mere concern and care to a sacrificial, ravishing, and severe love
 - ii. The greatness of one's love is tied to the greatness of the cost to make the object of your love flourish with life
 - c. God made us alive with Christ
 - i. The work is all the Father's by the Spirit! These three verses are all about Him and His work
 1. We don't know for sure how it works, only that God has said it to be true in His Word
 2. John 3:8 – The Spirit blows where he wishes with unseen source
 - ii. You, the dead enemies of God, were lumped together with His Son because of His love and mercy
 1. Regarding the new birth John Piper says this:

"[God] is a father. He does not deliver a baby. He begets an embryo. 1 Pet 1:23 says, "You have been born anew not of perishable seed but of imperishable." The doctor does not plant the seed. The father does. God does not come on the scene when this embryo is well-formed in the womb with all its chromosomes fixed. O no! When God comes on the scene, there is no spiritual embryo. And by the miracle of generation, God fathers life. He does not deliver man-made life like an obstetrician. He begets God-made life like a father."

2. You have been *totally* saved by grace alone!
 - a. You did not discover it! You were not wiser than your brothers or stronger than the Devil! God chose you and made you alive, bringing you up from the dead, where you were unable to even see or savor God, by imparting His Spirit within you.
 - b. Romans 8:9-10 – The Spirit brings life through the righteousness of Christ
 - c. 1 Cor 2:14-16 – the unregenerate man cannot even discern the things of God...but we have the mind of Christ

What is Our Response to This Truth?

The OUTCOME: REDEMPTION – The regenerated heart sees the beauty of God, submits to Him, casts himself upon Jesus and is redeemed from sin, death, Satan’s power, and God’s wrath

1. Fly to Christ as your Savior and Lord, depending upon Him alone as the Life-giver.
 - a. The More We Understand Our Former Condition as Powerless, the More That Our Praise is Centered Where it Should Be: On God Alone!
 - i. Any power that is attributed to us will spur the joy-sucking belief of man-centered salvation
 - ii. If we see our salvation as dependent upon ANY wisdom of ours, or ANY goodness or ability, the more we rob God of His proper glory in our salvation and make Him out to be sold into the slavery of our whim, and this is thoroughly wavering and frightening
 1. Wavering because my thoughts are not always faithful
 2. Frightening because my moods shift and if my righteousness is dependent upon me, then I live in constant fear and anxiety that I may not have it down good enough
2. PRAISE GOD FOR RAISING YOU FROM THE DEAD AND IMPARTING HIS SPIRIT WITHIN YOU TO LIFE!!
 - a. When we see just how desperate that we were, not merely needing to be forgiven (which is true), but needing to be created, resurrected, made alive, then we recognize how great God’s mercies really and truly go.
 - b. It is in this recognition that our affections are stirred up to God, gratitude is grown and holiness is desired.
 - c. We boast the most when we behold the beauty of the resurrecting regenerating works of God’s great and abundant mercy.

Do you wonder in awe and circumspect that you are a Christian? Does the very fact that you believe amaze you? Make you fall on your knees in gratitude to God? This is what regeneration shows us, that God is so superabundantly gracious to us that though we were dead to Him in our sins and rebellious hearts, He made us alive by His sovereign grace that we should be called children of God, the Body of Christ, the holy people, the Beloved bride of Christ!!! Oh! What an indescribable Savior!!