

## I. REGENERATION IS THE WORK OF GOD ALONE

### A. Regeneration is a miracle of God which God performs upon the sinner who is passive.

1. **The Bible is very clear that the sinner is not able to regenerate himself, to contribute to his regeneration, to cooperate with (or even resist) his regeneration or to prepare himself for regeneration.**
  - a. That is clear from what regeneration *is*: a new birth (a begetting, a bringing forth from the womb, etc), a spiritual resurrection, a spiritual heart transplant, circumcision of the heart, a new creation.
  - b. In none of the activities listed above does a person perform the action on himself, contribute to it, cooperate with it or prepare himself for it (birth, resurrection, heart transplant, creation, etc).
  - c. The Bible always uses the active voice with God (God regenerates) and the passive voice with man (man is *regenerated*; he does not regenerate himself) when the subject is regeneration.
2. **This must be true b/c the sinner is dead. A dead sinner cannot perform any positive spiritual activity.**
  - a. The absolute necessity of regeneration comes from man’s total depravity. Eph. 2:1, Rom. 3:10ff., etc.
  - b. No amount of self-improvement, turning over a new leaf, forsaking certain grossly sinful habits will bring about the new birth by man’s efforts.
  - c. Similarly, a sinner cannot, by arguments, by appeals, by pleas, etc., be persuaded to be born again.

### B. Man, who is fundamentally proud, desires to steal some of the glory of salvation for himself, and he starts at the very root. He says that regeneration is at least in part the work of man.

1. **This is the view of Liberalism which really teaches that regeneration in the biblical sense is unnecessary**
  - a. Liberal theologians, who really deny the miraculous (in creation, providence, in Scripture) teach that regeneration is simply man’s moral self-improvement. Men working together can bring about improvement of society, thus “regenerating” society. Regeneration occurs through education, etc.
  - b. Other liberals, such as Robert Schuler, teach that a man is born again by developing a healthy self esteem in which he denies his own sin.
  - c. This view is a revival of *Pelagius*. Pelagianism teaches that man is basically good, and does not need God for self improvement. Grace helps but is not necessary. This is a denial of salvation itself.
2. **This is the view of Roman Catholicism, Semi Pelagianism, Arminianism and much of Evangelicalism.**
  - a. Semi Pelagianism modified Pelagianism. The sinner does need grace because he is only spiritually sick, but the sinner has the ability to cooperate with or resist God’s regenerating grace.
  - b. Roman Catholicism adopted Semi Pelagianism. Man is not totally depraved. With the help of grace, man can merit with God. God gives “helping” grace to all men, especially in the preaching and through the sacraments. Man can prepare himself to receive grace. *Grace plus freewill produces regeneration.*
  - c. Arminianism is basically the same. God desires to regenerate all men; God works in all men to produce regeneration (or at least in all men who hear the preaching), but man can resist God’s work & thwart regeneration. Only by the freewill cooperating with grace does regeneration occur.
  - d. Most Evangelicals today believe that regeneration is the work of God *in response to the work of man*. “First, you believe, they say. Then God gives you the new birth. They appeal to John 1:12, “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.” But “power to become the sons of God” is not the new birth; it is adoption! And we must read verse 13, “which were born [that’s regeneration] not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The order in John 1:12-13 is 1) regeneration, 2) faith, 3) adoption (and justification).
  - e. The Evangelical view is impossible because faith is impossible without spiritual life, and there is no spiritual life without regeneration. *Regeneration must come first* as a sovereign, monergistic act of God.

## II. THE SOURCE OF THE LIFE OF REGENERATION IS JESUS CHRIST

### A. We have said that regeneration is the implanting of life into the heart of a dead sinner so that he lives. That begs the questions. What life? Whose life? What is the source of this life?

1. **This is not natural life. What we receive from our parents (our first father Adam and our biological parents) is natural, biological life but not spiritual life, not eternal life.**
  - a. Jesus makes that clear in John 3:6, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Flesh produces flesh; flesh cannot produce spirit.

- b. Paul also teaches this in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15: “the first man is of the earth, earthy ...” (v. 47); “as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy ...” (v. 48); “as we have borne the image of the earthy ...” (v. 49); “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (v. 50).
  - c. In addition, Paul speaks of the natural and the spiritual man elsewhere: “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor. 2:14); see also Romans 8:5-8.
- 2. Therefore, not only can no sinner of himself be born again because he is dead, powerless to produce life in of himself, but no sinner has of himself the right to be born again. No sinner has the “right to life.” In fact, all sinners deserve death, physical, spiritual and eternal death.**
- a. That is why the cross is necessary. The cross is the judicial ground or basis, the basis *in law*, for God’s granting to us life. God could not grant us life and remain just or righteous *without the cross*.
  - b. So when Christ died on the cross He paid for our sins, and in so doing He purchased for us the right to life. He did not simply purchase for us the possibility of life, but life itself.
  - c. He certainly did not purchase for all men the possibility of life (if they do something to merit it, apply it to themselves, etc). That would be to say to a corpse, “I will give you life, if you start breathing; or I will give you life if you cause your heart to beat.”
  - d. Christ died for some, and to them, and them only, He gives the life which He purchased. He gives that life first in regeneration, and regeneration produces lifelong, progressive spiritual activity.
- B. The source of this regeneration and the power of this regeneration are the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**
- 1. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, we could never be regenerated or “born again.”**
- a. If Jesus Christ is still dead He did not satisfy God’s justice against our sins.
  - b. If Jesus Christ is still dead He did not conquer death and death still has some claim on Him, and if on Him, also on us, since He represents us in His death and in His life.
  - c. If Jesus Christ is still dead He cannot bestow upon us life, because He never earned it and has not the power to give it. Only a living, resurrected, reigning Christ at the Right Hand of God can and does pour out His Spirit and make us partakers of eternal life.
- 2. The life which Jesus Christ imparts to us, implants into us, gives to us in regeneration is *His own life*.**
- a. The life which we receive in regeneration is not ordinary, biological, earthy life, but heavenly, spiritual, eternal life, the same life which Jesus Christ lives in heaven.
  - b. Eternal life is not simply endless existence, nor does it begin in heaven, so that we receive it at some point in the future. Eternal life is what we have *now*!
  - c. Eternal life is abundant life (John 10:10). All Christians at the point of regeneration have abundant life. There is no second blessing for only certain Christians; eternal life is fellowship with and knowledge of God (John 17:3); eternal life is “immortality” (II Tim. 1:10), the abolishing of death, never-ending bliss.
  - d. And all of this comes from *union* with Christ. His life flows to us as life from the Head flows to all the members of the body. It was purchased on the cross by the sufferings and death of Christ; it comes to us by the power of the resurrection and we receive it by the Holy Spirit. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (I Pet. 1:3).
- C. SUMMARY**
1. **Regeneration is the implanting into the heart** of the totally depraved sinner the life of Jesus Christ.
  2. **Regeneration is the first of the steps** in the Ordo Salutis where God applies the various benefits of salvation.
  3. **Regeneration (in the narrower sense)** happens once, happens instantaneously, happens without the will or cooperation of the sinner, and the sinner is passive. It is the sovereign, irresistible work of the Holy Spirit.
  4. **Regeneration becomes ours because Christ died and rose again to give it.** It is the beginning of eternal life as a seed which sprouts forth and grows unto everlasting glory in heaven.
  5. **Canons III/IV, A, 12** (page 47): “*And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture, and denominated a new creation: a resurrection from the dead, a making alive... evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation, or the resurrection from the dead.*”