

Chapter 34: Regeneration

What does it mean to be born again?

- I. Definition: *Regeneration is a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us.*
- II. Explanation & Scriptural Basis
 - A. Regeneration is Totally a Work of God: (Ezek. 36:26-27; John 1:13; Eph. 2:5; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23, 25)
 1. Scripture speaks of being born (John 3:3-8) and *there is nothing you can do to be born* (John 1:13).
 2. In the OT, God promised a future time of giving new spiritual life to his people (Ezek. 36:26-27)
 3. Distinction between effective calling and regeneration:
Effective calling is God the Father *speaking* powerfully to us, and *regeneration* is God the Father and the Holy Spirit *working* powerfully in us to make us alive
 4. Also called Irresistible Grace.
 - a. God effectively calls people and also gives them regeneration.
 - b. Both actions guarantee that we will respond in saving faith.
 - c. People still make voluntary, willing choice in responding to the gospel.
 - B. The Exact Nature of Regeneration is Mysterious to Us:
 1. From spiritually dead to alive (Eph. 2:1, 5) (not exactly right to say that only our spirits are made alive)
 2. Every part of us is affected by regeneration (2 Cor. 5:17)
 3. Just as wind has mysterious qualities, regeneration also shows us the result even though we cannot see the act itself (John 3:8)
 4. While regeneration is an *instantaneous* event (it happens only once), the change will *become evident* over time.
 - C. In This Sense of “Regeneration,” It Comes Before Saving Faith:
 1. It is in fact this work of God that gives us the spiritual *ability* to respond to God in faith. (John 3:5, 6:44, 65; Acts 16:14; 1 Cor. 2:14; Col. 2:13)
 2. But it is often so close in time that it is hard to see how anyone could know about someone’s regeneration unless it comes to expression in saving faith.
 3. Sometimes people talk about regeneration following saving faith (e.g., Evangelical Free Church of America statement).
 - a. This emphasis focuses on the *outward evidence* or *results* of regeneration.
 - b. Yet the wording of Scripture uses “regeneration” as the instantaneous, *initial* work of God in which he imparts spiritual life to us.
 - D. Genuine Regeneration Must Bring Results in Life:
 1. Cannot Go on Sinning (1 John 2:29, 3:9)
 2. Christ-like Love (1 John 4:7)
 3. Overcoming the World (1 John 5:3-4)
 4. Protection from Satan (1 John 4:4; 5:18)
 5. Fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; Matt. 7:15-20)
 6. These results are *character traits*, not church activity or even miracles (Matt. 7:22-23)
 7. *Therefore*, it is impossible for a person to be regenerated and not become truly converted.
- III. Questions for Personal Application