



Doctrine: The Holy Spirit

What the Holy Spirit Does in Us:

1, Regeneration

As far as our personal experience of salvation goes the *first* thing the Holy Spirit does in us is the work of regeneration. To regenerate means to bring something to life that is dead. It refers to a brand-new spiritual life, not just a rehabilitated one. It means that we were dead and now we are alive.

There are two primary views as to how regeneration comes about. The Arminian view is that God gives every person sufficient grace (prevenient grace) to respond to the gospel in faith if they choose to do so. This faith precedes and is the cause, the necessary trigger of regeneration. The Calvinist/Reformed view is that regeneration is the cause of faith. Every person is spiritually dead and cannot believe until God grants spiritual life that is the cause of faith. The order of regeneration and faith is not temporal but logical and causal. They always arrive together but one causes the other.

The apostle Paul wrote, “As for you, you were dead in your transgression and sins...” (Ephesians 2:1). We were not ill, but dead; not damaged but dead; not in a coma but dead; not badly injured but dead. We had no more capacity to respond to spiritual stimuli than a corpse has capacity to respond to physical stimuli. We cannot respond in faith to the truth while dead. Paul goes on to write, “God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4-5). Faith is God’s gift to us, not ours to him (Eph. 2:8-10).

Regeneration is an act of God. As Jesus called Lazarus from the grave without help from Lazarus so he must also call the spiritually dead to life. The apostle John says that we are, “children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:13). We can take no more credit for our spiritual birth than we can our physical birth. Jesus once said, “I *give* them eternal life, and they shall never perish....” (John 10:28). It is all mercy, or in biblical language, grace.

Regeneration is a *powerful* act of God. Paul writes, “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know... his *incomparably* great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead... (Ephesians 1:18-20). No power you have seen or can

imagine can be compared to the power exerted on us in regeneration. What has happened in the regenerated is more powerful than a nuclear bomb. People can make bombs; only God can make life. If you love God and his law, if you hate sin and trust Christ for forgiveness, you are a miracle stemming from the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Without regeneration none of those qualities would be in you.

What this means is that we have an edge in life. By a power incomparable we have been made the children of God. We are demonstrably changed in our desires. This is why John can write, “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they *cannot* go on sinning, because they have been born of God” (1 John 3:9). We can sin, and will, but we cannot go on living in sin as our way of life. It means that living the Christian life is where our heart now beats.

Finally, the security of our salvation is directly related to who authors our regeneration, who triggers it, and with what kind of power that has been done. If we think we can lose what God has determined to give we have a seriously deficient view of the power and sovereignty of God in new birth.



"...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk
of the word, so that by it you may grow in
respect to salvation...." (1 Peter 2:2)

CONDENSED MILK

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