

The Essential Truth of Regeneration

It is a great blessing to know the essential truth concerning regeneration, the matters related to being born of God.

The *meaning of regeneration* is to be born again or born anew, to receive another life—the divine, eternal, uncreated, indestructible life of God—in addition to our created, natural, human life. Regeneration does not involve the reformation of our human life or the improvement of our human life. When one is regenerated, one does not have a new beginning in one's human life. The meaning of regeneration is receiving the eternal life of God and being born of this life to become a child of God. This is neither a symbolic birth nor a metaphorical birth—it is an actual birth in spirit of God the Spirit.

Some theologians suppose that there is a *need for regeneration* because we are fallen and sinful; however, this is only a secondary part of the truth. Of course, we all are sinners needing to be both redeemed and enlivened by God. However, the primary need for regeneration is not that we are sinful but that we are natural, that is, we are God's creature with only the created human life. Even if human-kind had never fallen into sin, we would still need regeneration because, as God's creatures, we do not have God's life. Thus, we need to be regenerated primarily because we lack the life of God, not because we have fallen away from God. To be sure, we are fallen and need to be brought back to God through redemption, but redemption is a procedure that solves the problem of sin so that God's original intention of imparting His life into His creatures can be fulfilled.

The *basis of regeneration* is justification by grace through faith. It is erroneous to claim that in logical order regeneration precedes justification. The opposite is true: Justification is the basis for and is prior to regeneration. According to Romans 8:10, it is because of righteousness that the human spirit becomes life through regeneration. God cannot dispense Himself into unclean vessels. Only after we have been redeemed, justified, and cleansed can the holy and righteous God impart His life into us. The fact that our spirit is life because of righteousness indicates that regeneration follows and is based upon justification.

The *Agent of regeneration* is the life-giving Spirit, and the *means of regeneration* is faith. The Spirit is the processed and consummated Triune God reaching us to have contact

with us and to impart the divine life into us. We are, therefore, born of the Spirit as the Agent of regeneration. Corresponding to the operation of this Agent is our faith—our God-given capacity to believe in Christ. Eternal life is received through faith. Only those who have faith in, who believe into, the Son of God receive the life of God to be born of God. Our believing is not a work carried out by our natural will; rather, our ability to believe and our action of believing are totally dependent upon God's gracious gift of the precious faith by which we believe into Christ, receive the Spirit, and are regenerated.

This divine birth occurs not in our soul or in our heart but in the human spirit, the organ created by God for us to contact God, receive God, and contain God. Hence, the human spirit is the *place of regeneration*. That which is born of the Spirit of God is our regenerated human spirit. Those who insist that spirit and soul are the same cannot be clear about the place of regeneration in particular nor about the truth of regeneration in general. Nevertheless, the Bible clearly reveals that we have a spirit, that our spirit is distinct from our soul, and that it is our spirit which has been born of God.

The *result of regeneration* is that we become children of God, possessing the life of God, the nature of God, and the communicable attributes of God. There is no greater miracle than the marvelous divine birth in our spirit, which results in God the Creator becoming God our Father and in our becoming not only God's creatures but also God's children. To be the children of God with the life and nature of God is the wonderful result of regeneration.

The *goal of regeneration* is not that we be saved from sin and then be adopted by God to spend eternity in heaven. The goal of regeneration is the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose—to have many sons conformed to the image of Christ, the firstborn Son, for the corporate expression of the Triune God. From eternity, God's intention has been to create us in His image and then to regenerate us with His life so that, for eternity, we would be the New Jerusalem for His expression. As creatures of God who have been redeemed and justified by God, we have been born of God for the expression of God. This is the essential truth concerning regeneration.

by the Editors